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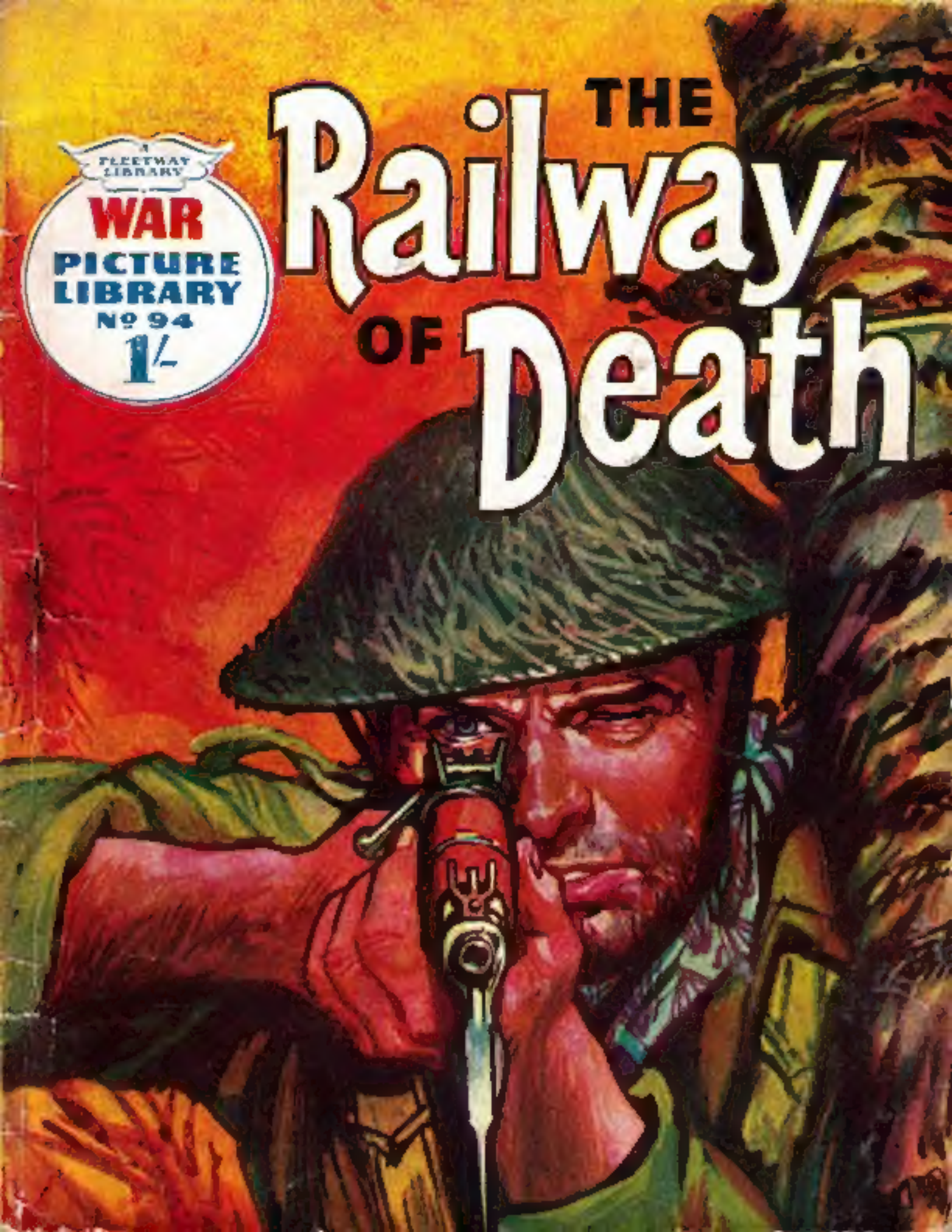
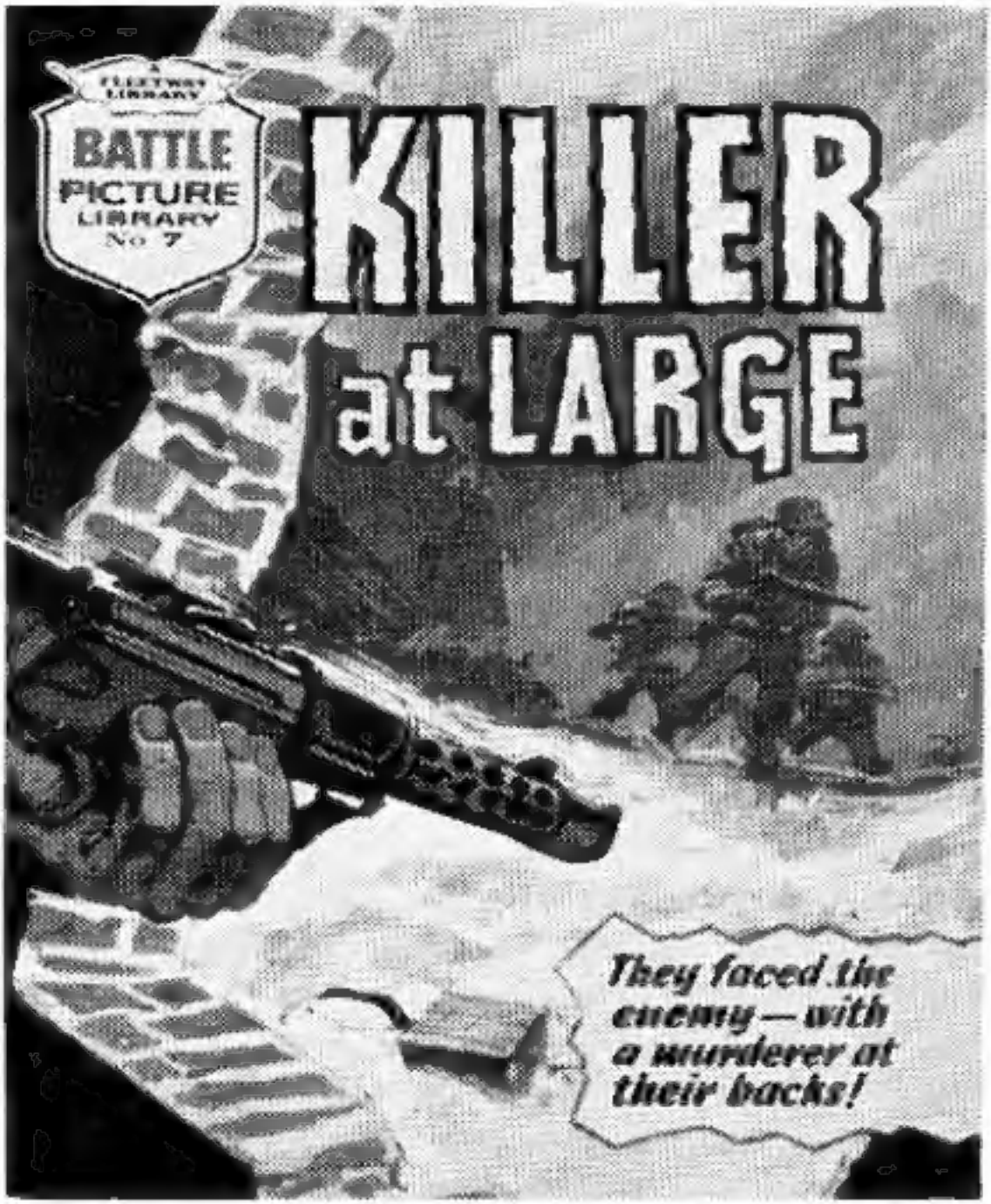
THE Railway OF Death



TENSE... TOUGH... TERRIFIC!

BATTLE PICTURE LIBRARY

Issues Numbers 7 & 8 On Sale: MONDAY 17th APRIL



TWO Dramatic, All-action Issues Every Month

THE RAILWAY OF DEATH

IT WAS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR THAT THE SCOTTISH FIGHTING REGIMENTS EARNED THEMSELVES, FROM THE GERMANS THE GRIMLY RESPECTFUL NICKNAME "THE LADIES FROM HELL". THE KILTED SOLDIERS WITH THE WILD BATTLE CRIES ON THEIR LIPS WERE OPPONENTS TO BE FEARED. IN WORLD WAR II, KHAKI BATTLE-DRESS REPLACED THE KILTS, BUT THE SCOTS' FIGHTING REPUTATION REMAINED SECOND TO NONE.

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Chapter 1. ENLIST — OR ELSE!

THIS IS THE STORY OF A BATTALION BORN IN THE BACK STREETS . . . THE BACK STREETS OF AN AREA DESCRIBED AS NETHERBURN ON THE MUNICIPAL MAPS OF A SCOTTISH CITY, BUT BETTER KNOWN AS "THE SHAMBLES" — THE DESPAIR OF THE POLICE AND THE HAUNT OF CHARACTERS LIKE CHUNK MCGRORY . . .

CRIVVENS! HERE COME FIZZER GALBRAITH AND A CROWD O' HIS BUTTIES, AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE SPOILING FOR A FIGHT, CHUNK!

THEY'LL GET YIN! AWAY AND SPREAD THE WORD, ECK!

CHUNK MCGRORY WAS IN FUNDS THAT DAY. HE HAD STOOD TREAT TO A SELECT FEW OF HIS CRONIES AND WAS STUFFED TO THE GILLS WITH ROCK SALMON AND CHIPS. A BATTLE-ROYAL WAS ALL HE NEEDED TO MAKE HIS CONTENTMENT COMPLETE . . .

I CANNA THINK WHAT BRINGS YA HERE, FIZZER. BUT I'M THINKING IT'S AMBULANCES YE'LL NEED TO TAKE YE BACK BY THE TIME WE'RE THROUGH WITH YE.

FIZZER GALBRAITH CAME ON, BIG SHOULDERS SWINGING, BIG FISTS CLENCHED. A SOLID BLOCK OF A MAN...SOLID FROM THE NECK UP AS WELL, ACCORDING TO MCGRORY. BUT THEN HE WAS PREJUDICED, FOR HE AND FIZZER WERE FOES OF LONG-STANDING...

YEARS OF FEUDING LAY BEHIND THEM. HOW IT HAD ALL BEGUN NO ONE COULD RIGHTLY SAY. BUT STREET BY STREET "THE SHAMBLES" HAD TAKEN SIDES, AND THE DISTRICT WAS PRETTY EVENLY DIVIDED IN ITS LOYALTIES.

THERE WAS NO MORE BANDYING OF WORDS. GALBRAITH STUCK HIS HEAD DOWN AND CHARGED LIKE A BULL AND HIS SUPPORTERS SURGED AFTER HIM. CHUNK AND HIS PARTY SQUARED UP TO MEET THE SHOCK OF THE ONRUSH ...
NO! DON'T MAKE-A DA TROUBLE HERE, I BEG-A YOU! SETTLE YOUR DIFFERENCES SOME-A PLACE ELSE! ONLY LAST WEEK MY WINDOW WAS-A BUSTED!
STAND BACK AND STOP YER YAMMERING, TONI!

MCGRORY THRUST THE FRANTIC ITALIAN ASIDE, AND JUST ABOUT HAD TIME TO UNWIND A CLUBBING BLOW AS GALBRAITH HURTLED STRAIGHT AT HIM.
OUCH!

FIZZER BUCKLED AT THE KNEES, BUT ONLY MOMENTARILY. STILL WITH HIS HEAD DOWN, HE STEAM-ROLLERED CHUNK MCGRORY SLAP INTO THE NEARBY SHOP-WINDOW. THERE WAS A SPLINTERING CRASH -- AND AN ANGUISHED WAIL FROM TONI YAKIMINI ...

AI-W!

THE ODDS WERE IN FAVOUR OF GALBRAITH AND HIS BAND. NOT FOR LONG, THOUGH.. MCGRORY HAD PARTISANS WITHIN EASY CALL, AND A STOCKY LITTLE FIGURE WAS DRUMMING THEM UP -- ALEC RAMSAY, ECK FOR SHORT...

WHAT'S UP, ECK?

CHUCK NEEDS YER HELP! FIZZER AND SOME OF HIS MOB ARE ON THE WARPATH! THEY'RE AT YAKIMINI'S!

FROM DIM ALLEYS, FROM THE SLEAZY WARRENS OF TENEMENT BUILDINGS, REINFORCEMENTS POURED FORTH IN ROISTERING RESPONSE ...

WHAT'S ALL THE STRAMASH, WEE ECK?

FIZZER GALBRAITH AND A CROWD OF HIS BUTTIES HAVE CORNERED CHUNK AND A HANDFUL O' THE BOYS! BUT DINNA YOU FRET, MA MCGRORY! WE'LL SEE FIZZER AND HIS MOB GET THEIR LICKS!

OLD MEG MCGRORY TURNED TO LOOK SHEEPISHLY AT A VISITOR WHO HAD CALLED ON HER ONLY A FEW MINUTES AGO. A SMARTLY-DRESSED VISITOR, STRANGELY OUT OF PLACE IN THAT WILD NEIGHBOURHOOD ...
AND HERE WAS I TELLING YOU HOW WELL MY LADDIE, CHUNK, HAD BEEN BEHAVING HIMSEL', MISTER CRAWFORD -- I MEAN, LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CRAWFORD.
AND HERE WAS I FINDING IT HARD TO BELIEVE YOU WERE TELLING ME THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT HOLY TERROR!

A TERRITORIAL OFFICER, JAMES CRAWFORD HAD BEEN MOBILISED IN 1939. PRIOR TO THAT, HE HAD ALSO BEEN INTERESTED IN WELFARE WORK IN NETHERBURN. NOW, BACK IN SCOTLAND AFTER AN ABSENCE OF TWO YEARS, HE WAS LOOKING UP SOME OF THOSE HE HAD TRIED TO HELP IN FORMER DAYS ...
CHUNK'S A GOOD LAD AT HEART. HE'S REALLY AS GENTLE AS A LAMB BY NATURE, COLONEL. AND HE'S CLEVER, FORBYE. OH, HE'S GOT A HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS ALL RIGHT.
THAT'S MORE THAN THOSE TWO FRIENDS OF GALBRAITH'S WILL HAVE, IF YOUR GENTLE LAMB DOESN'T LET UP ON THEM!

THE FURY OF THE FIGHT WAS MOUNTING. IT WAS TO SOAR TO THE DIMENSIONS OF A RIOT AS NEWS OF ITS OUTBREAK SWEPT THROUGH "THE SHAMBLES".

HELP! MURDER! POLICE! GIVE-A ME DA POLICE!

AND BEFORE LONG A TAUT-FACED LIMB OF THE LAW WAS REACTING TO THE TIDINGS OF A FRENZIED ITALIAN SHOP-KEEPER ...

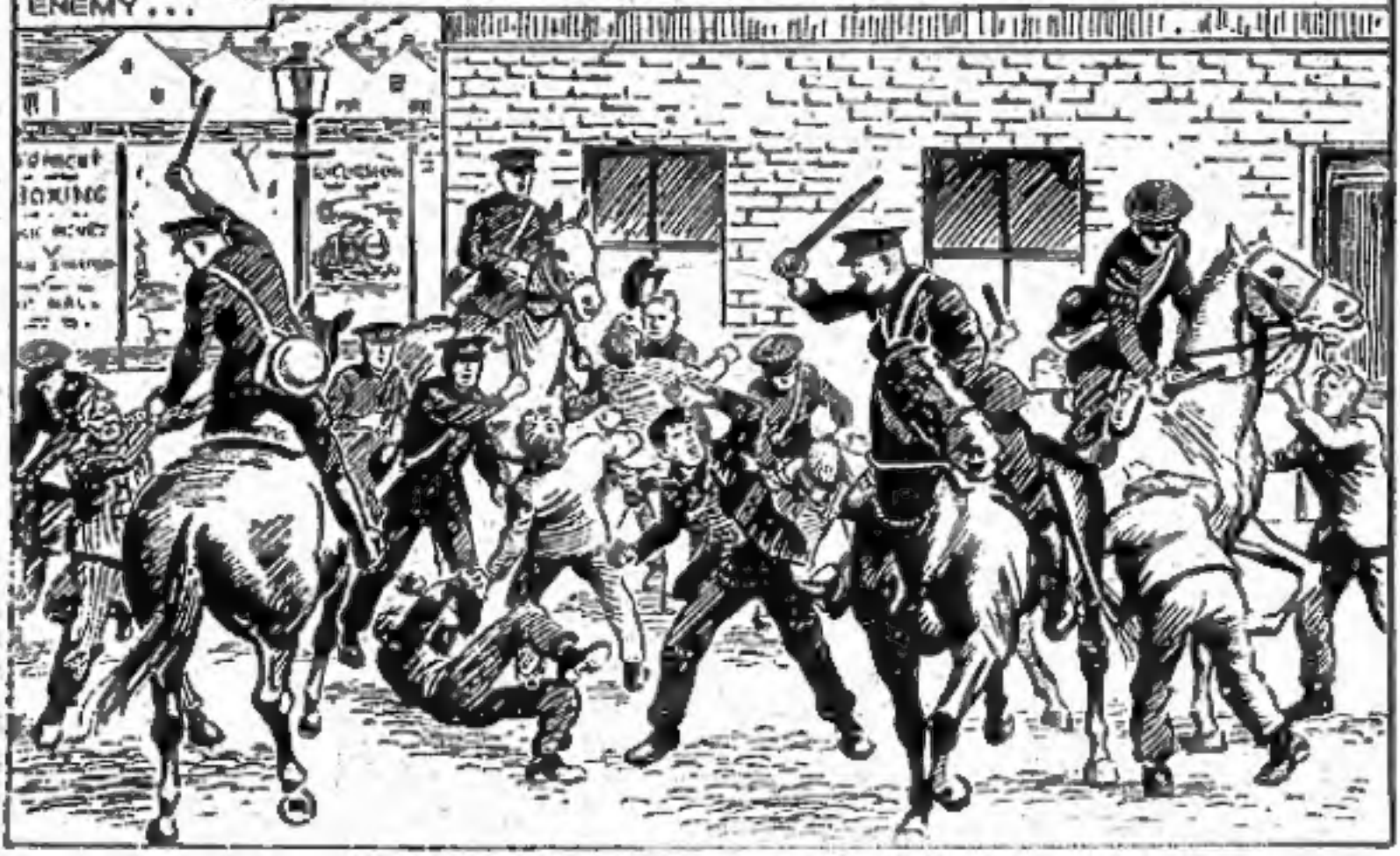
IT'S YAKIMINI! THERE'S A SHINDY IN THE SHAMBLES! NOTIFY THE SUPERINTENDENT, CONSTABLE! AND TELL HIM IT SOUNDS LIKE WE'LL NEED HELP FROM OTHER STATIONS IN THE CITY!

THE POLICE WENT INTO ACTION -- IN A BIG WAY. THEY SWOOPED DOWN ON THE NETHERBURN DISTRICT BY THE CAR-LOAD, AND ON FOOT ... WITH ATTENDANT BLACK MARIAS ...

LOOK, LADS! SCATTER! HERE'S THE POLIS!

'THE POLIS!'. THE CRY WAS THE SIGNAL FOR THE RIVAL FACTIONS TO BREAK OFF HOSTILITIES AND BEAT A HASTY RETREAT. BUT THEIR ESCAPE WAS CUT OFF BY OTHER SQUADS OF BLUE-UNIFORMED STALWARTS ...

FOR ONCE, McGRORY AND GALBRAITH WERE IN AGREEMENT. SO WERE THEIR SUPPORTERS... OLD ANIMOSITIES FORGOTTEN, THEY MASSED TO MEET A COMMON ENEMY...



IT WAS WITH A SOMBRE EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE THAT JAMES CRAWFORD JOINED A GROUP OF RESPECTABLE BYSTANDERS WHO HAD GATHERED TO WATCH THE AFTERMATH OF THE DISTURBANCE ...
WHAT THOSE ROWDIES WANT IS A TOUCH OF ARMY DISCIPLINE!
MAYBE THEY'LL SOON GET IT. THE CALL-UP FOR THEIR AGE GROUP CAN'T BE FAR OFF. BUT THE ARMY CAN HAVE 'EM. WE CAN DO WITHOUT THAT KIND IN THE NAVY.
I'D HATE TO SEE 'EM IN THE R.A.F. AND THAT'S A FACT. STILL, WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM 'THE SHAMBLES'? IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A BREEDING GROUND FOR HOOLIGANS!

THAT SNATCH OF CONVERSATION BY THE THREE SERVICEMEN GAVE THE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL FOOD FOR THOUGHT. AS A RESULT, HE OBTAINED AN INTERVIEW WITH A SENIOR OFFICER IN SCOTTISH COMMAND AND PUT UP A SUGGESTION ...
YOU MAY THINK I'M A SENTIMENTAL THEORIST, GENERAL, BUT I HONESTLY BELIEVE THIS IDEA OF MINE WOULD WORK OUT
IT'S AN UNDERTAKING I WOULDN'T BE PREPARED TO FACE — NOT AT ANY PRICE. NEVERTHELESS I'LL DO AS YOU ASK AND REFER IT TO THE POWERS-THAT-BE.

THE ARMY HIGHER-UPS APPROVED CRAWFORD'S PLAN -- THOUGH HESITANTLY. IN CONSEQUENCE HE CALLED ON THE PROCURATOR FISCAL, PROSECUTING OFFICIAL IN THE SCOTTISH LEGAL SYSTEM ...
AS I UNDERSTAND IT, YOUR REGIMENT HAS BEEN AUTHORISED TO RAISE ANOTHER BATTALION AND YOU ARE PROPOSING IT SHOULD BE RECRUITED ENTIRELY FROM THE NETHERBURN AREA.
PRECISELY -- AND THE NUCLEUS OF IT WOULD BE THE MEN WHO ARE IN CUSTODY BECAUSE OF THAT RECENT STREET-BATTLE. GIVEN THE OPTION, I FANCY THEY'D BE WILLING TO ANTICIPATE THEIR CALL-UP AND ENLIST FORTHWITH -- IN PREFERENCE TO SERVING A JAIL-SENTENCE.

THE PROCURATOR-FISCAL EYED CRAWFORD QUIZZICALLY ...
WELL, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GIVE THEM SUCH AN OPTION -- AFTER THE HEARING OF THE CASE -- AND SUBJECT TO THE COURT'S APPROVAL, OF COURSE BUT I HOPE YOU REALISE WHAT YOU'D BE TAKING ON, COLONEL.
I DO I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CONVINCED THAT IF THEY HAD A DECENT CHANCE, MOST OF THESE ROUGHS FROM THE NETHERBURN AREA WOULD MAKE GOOD. I'M EAGER TO PROVE IT BY WELDING THEM INTO A MILITARY UNIT.

SO IT CAME ABOUT THAT CRAWFORD ATTENDED COURT ON THE DAY CHUNK, FIZZER AND NUMEROUS OF THEIR FOLLOWERS APPEARED THERE. THEY WERE DEALT WITH IN BATCHES -- THE FIRST BATCH INCLUDING MCGRORY, GALBRAITH AND WEE ECK...

YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF COMMITTING A SERIOUS BREACH OF THE PEACE. MY INCLINATION IS TO PUNISH YOU WITH THE FULL SEVERITY OF THE LAW. HOWEVER, THE PROCURATOR-FISCAL HAS INFORMED ME THAT AN ARMY OFFICER IS HERE TO SPEAK ON YOUR BEHALF

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CRAWFORD WAS CALLED, FIRED WITH ENTHUSIASM FOR THE EXPERIMENT HE WAS SO ANXIOUS TO MAKE, HE DWELT ON IT WITH THE PERSUASIVENESS OF AN IDEALIST...

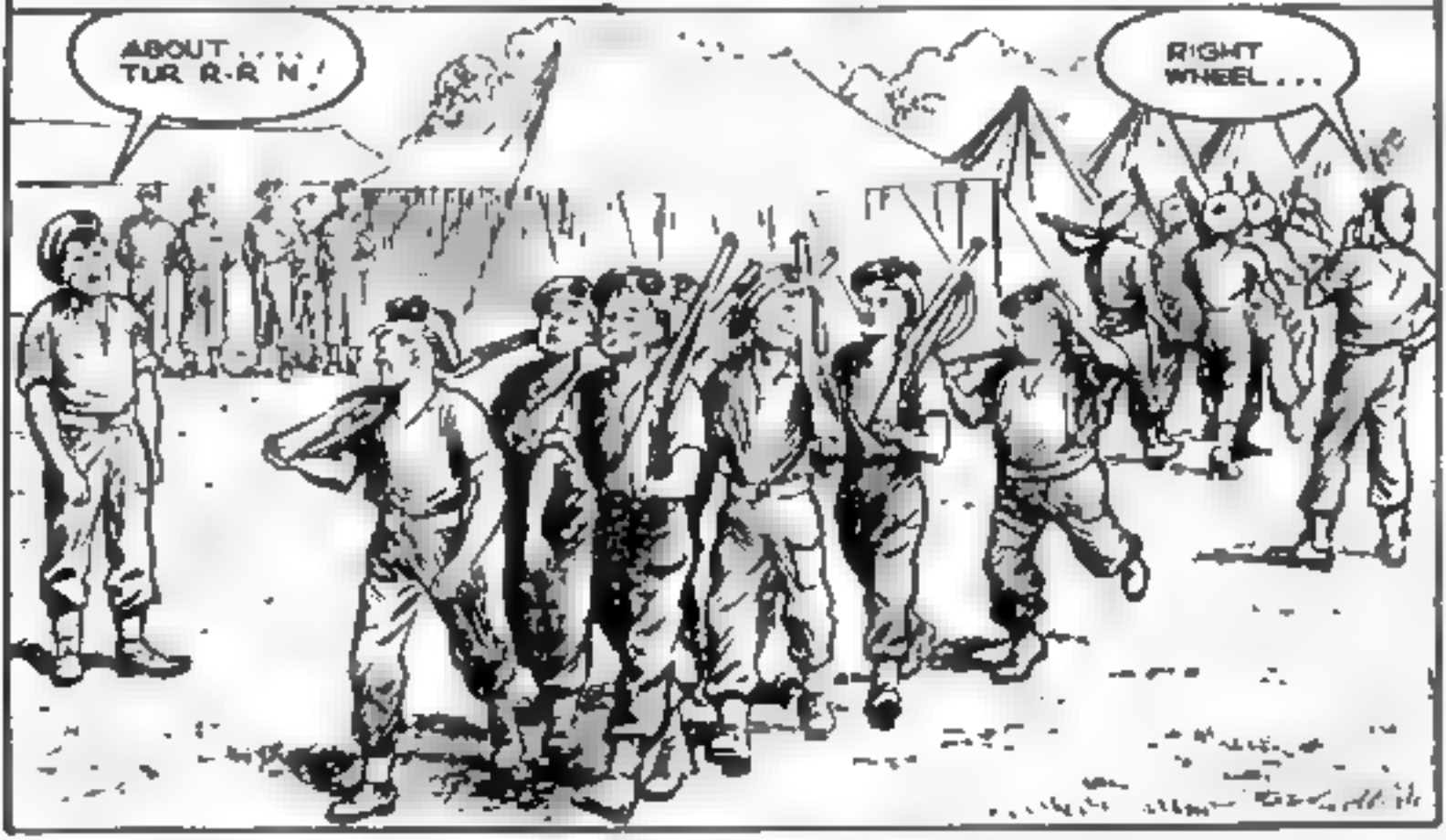
IN SHORT, MY LORD, I CONSIDER MY PROPOSITION OFFERS THESE MEN A REAL CHANCE OF REDEEMING THEMSELVES -- OF BECOMING USEFUL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. THE ARMY AUTHORITIES HAVE SANCTIONED IT. I RESPECTFULLY REQUEST YOU TO DO THE SAME.

HIS LORDSHIP SEEMED TO DEBATE WITH HIMSELF. FINALLY HE REACHED A DECISION.

VERY WELL, COLONEL. THE ACCUSED WILL BE GIVEN THE CHOICE -- EITHER OF GOING TO PRISON, OR ENLISTING IN YOUR UNIT. BUT IF THEY ACCEPT THE LATTER ALTERNATIVE, I SINCERELY TRUST YOU'LL NEVER REGRET HAVING PINNED YOUR FAITH IN THEM.

CHUNK McGRORY AND FIZZER GALBRAITH AND THOSE WHO STOOD INDICTED WITH THEM WERE NOW DEBATING THE ISSUE, TOO -- IN HOARSE UNDERTONES ..
ENLIST IS IT? SOME CHOICE! JOINING THE ARMY WOULD BE AS BAD AS GOING TO THE NICK.
NOTHING COULD BE AS BAD AS THE NICK!
WE'LL ALL BE CALLED UP IN A FEW MONTHS' TIME, ANYWAY. BESIDES, IT WOULD BE DUSHY IN CRAWFIE'S LOT. HE'S A SOFT MARK. YIN OF THESE FLAMING DO GOODERS. WE COULD RUN THINGS JUST THE WAY WE WANTED.
THEY ACCEPTED THE ALTERNATIVE TO JAIL. SO DID THE REST OF THEIR CRONIES WHO CAME AFTER THEM! THAT WAS HOW LEUTENANT COLONEL CRAWFORD'S UNIT CAME INTO BEING -- FOR BETTER OR WORSE ...
GREAT GRIEF! ARE WE REALLY EXPECTED TO MAKE SOLDIERS OF THIS SCRUFFY LOOKING CROWD OF LAY-ABOUTS?
THAT'S THE GENERAL IDEA, MAJOR. I AGREE WE'VE THE VERY DICKENS OF A JOB AHEAD OF US. BUT I'M DETERMINED TO SEE IT THROUGH.

IT WAS A TOUGH JOB ALL RIGHT, TRYING TO BUILD A BATTALION OUT OF SUCH MATERIAL, BUT JAMES CRAWFORD TACKLED IT WITH FINESSE, AND--STARTLINGLY--HE MADE CHUNK MCGRORY AND FIZZER GALBRAITH UP TO SERGEANTS AS SOON AS HE POSSIBLY COULD ...



LIEUTENANT COLONEL CRAWFORD AND HIS SUBORDINATE OFFICERS HAD GOOD CAUSE TO WINCE AS THEY WATCHED CHUNK AND FIZZER DRILL THEIR SQUADS ...

CRAWFORD WAITED TILL THE TWO NEW SERGEANTS CALLED THEIR MEN TO A HAPHAZARD HALT. THEN HE APPROACHED FIZZER. THE OTHER OFFICERS COULD HARDLY BELIEVE THEIR EARS WHEN THEY HEARD THE COLONEL SPEAK A WORD OR TWO OF PRAISE!
WELL DONE, GALBRAITH! YOU'VE THE MAKINGS OF A FIRST-RATE N.C.O. ALL RIGHT. THAT'S A PROMISING SQUAD YOU HAVE, TOO. MCGRORY AND HIS PLATOON WEREN'T BAD EITHER, THOUGH NOT UP TO YOUR STANDARD, OF COURSE ...
BY JINGO! THIS IS ONE IN THE EYE FOR THAT BIG BAG OF WIND, MCGRORY!
FIZZER'S BLUNT FACE HAD REGISTERED SURPRISE AND PLEASURE. HIS THICK-WIT VANITY WAS TICKLED. SMIRKING WITH SELF-ESTEEM, HE DARTED A MALICIOUS GLANCE AT CHUNK WHO WAS GLOWERING IN MORTIFICATION ..
DID YE GET THAT? LISTEN, I GINNA PLAY SECOND FIDDLE TO A NUMSKULL LIKE GALBRAITH! I'LL SHOW HIM WHO'S THE BETTER SERGEANT! AND YOUSE LADS HAD BETTER BACK ME UP, SEE?

SHREWDLY IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, CRAWFORD FOSTERED A COMPETITIVE SPIRIT... PLAYING FIZZER AGAINST CHUNK, AND BOTH OF THEM AGAINST OTHER SERGEANTS IN THE UNIT.

THERE THEY GO ON THEIR FIRST ROUTE MARCH, SIR. I'LL ADMIT THEY'RE LESS OF A RABBLE THAN THEY WERE. BUT I CAN'T THINK THEY'LL EVER MAKE SOLDIERS INCIDENTALLY, I'M PUTTING TWO OF THEM ON A CHARGE FOR INSOLENCE — MCGRORY AND GALBRAITH

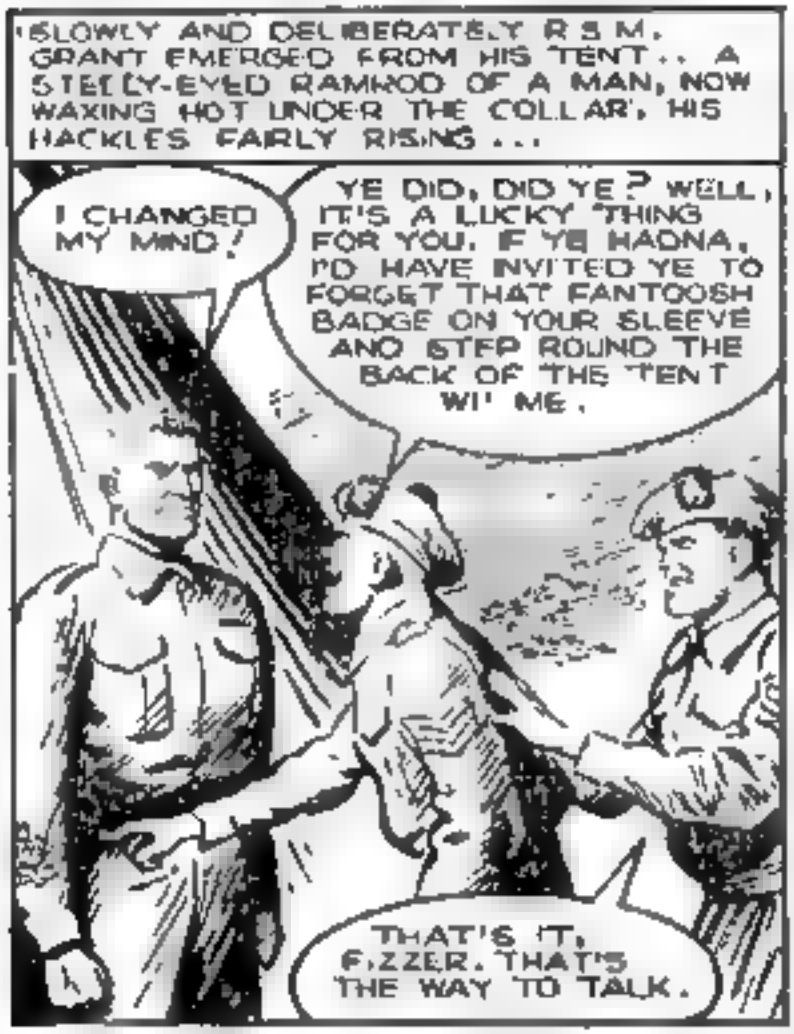
NO, DON'T DO THAT, R S M. GRANT. I MIGHT BE COMPELLED TO RELIEVE THEM OF THEIR STRIPES. HANDLE THEM IN YOUR OWN WAY, EVEN IF IT'S AGAINST REGULATIONS.

BATTALION HQ

OUTSIDE OF THE OFFICERS, REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR GRANT WAS AMONG THE FEW IN THE UNIT WHO DID NOT HAIL FROM "THE SHAMBLES". A STRAIGHT-BACKED REGULAR ARMY MARTINET, HE FAIRLY BRISTLED EVERY TIME HE LOOKED AT SUCH MEN AS CHUNK MCGRORY AND FIZZER GALBRAITH ...

HANDLE THEM IN MY OWN WAY, EH? THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME! I'LL BE GLAD OF THE CHANCE TO TAKE THOSE ARROGANT, SWAGGERING LOUTS DOWN A PEG!

THAT EVENING, ON THEIR RETURN FROM THE ROUTE MARCH, CHUNK AND FIZZER PAID A NON-COURTESY CALL ON THE REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR. ONCE AGAIN THIS WAS ONE OF THE RARE OCCASIONS WHEN MCGRORY AND GALBRAITH SEEMED TO BE IN ACCORD..
NOW WE'LL SEE SOME FIREWORKS, LADS! CHUNK AND FIZZER ARE ALL SET TO SORT OUT THE JPPERTY R.S.M.
R S M
HEY, YOU IN THERE! WHAT'S THIS ABOUT CLAPPIN' ME AND MCGRORY ON A CHARGE?


SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY R.S.M. GRANT EMERGED FROM HIS TENT.. A STEELY-EYED RAMROD OF A MAN, NOW WAXING HOT UNDER THE COLLAR, HIS HACKLES FAIRLY RISING...
I CHANGED MY MIND!
YE DID, DID YE? WELL, IT'S A LUCKY THING FOR YOU. IF YE HADNA, I'D HAVE INVITED YE TO FORGET THAT FANTOOSH BADGE ON YOUR SLEEVE AND STEP ROUND THE BACK OF THE TENT WI' ME.
THAT'S IT, FIZZER. THAT'S THE WAY TO TALK.

IT WAS TALK THAT SUITED CHUNK, IT SUITED GRANT, TOO... THE R.S.M. STARTED ROUND THE BELL-TENT AND BECKONED GALBRAITH AFTER HIM...
WHAT'S GOT INTO YE, CHUNK? ARE YE GOING TO LET FIZZER HAVE ALL THE CREDIT FOR GIVING THE R.S.M. A SHELLACKING?
FAIR'S FAIR, WEE ECK. DID YE EVER KNOW ME TO TAK' AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE?

WITH SHOULDERS HUNCHED AND AN EXPECTANT BATTLE-GLEAM IN HIS EYE, FIZZER HOBNAILED HIS WAY OUT OF SIGHT BEHIND THE TENT. THERE WAS A SCUFFLING OF FEET, THE DULL THUD OF A FIST SLAMMING INTO FLESH AND BONE ... AND FIZZER REAPPEARED!
JINGO! I DINNA BELIEVE IT!

FIZZER SAILED THROUGH THE AIR AND LANDED WITH A THUMP THAT RAISED THE DUST. HE LAY SPREAD-EAGLED, MOUTH AJAR, EYES SCREWED SHUT...
WELL, MCGRORY, WOULD YOU CARE TO TAKE A LITTLE NAP ALONGSIDE YOUR FRIEND?
HE'S NA FRIEND O' MINE, SERGEANT-MAJOR. IF HE HAD BEEN, 'D HAVE TELL'T HIM WHAT I HEARD THIS MORNING - THAT YOU WERE AN EX HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP OF THE ARMY.
WELL, I'LL BE DASHED! CHUNK'S A FLY ONE ALL RIGHT.

Chapter 2. RIFF-RAFF

THREE MONTHS LATER, WITH BASIC TRAINING OVER, LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CRAWFORD'S UNIT WAS POSTED SOUTH TO JOIN A BRIGADE THAT INCLUDED A BATTALION OF THE GUARDS...

LOOK WHAT THE WIND'S BLOWN IN! DID YOU EVER SEE A SHOWER LIKE THAT?

I HEARD ABOUT THEM LAST TIME I WAS ON LEAVE. THEY'RE FROM A DUMP CALLED NETHERBURN, A ROUGH QUARTER IN MY HOME-TOWN, FULL OF STREET-GANGS. THE NETHERBURN NEOS, THAT WAS OUR NICKNAME FOR THEM.

IT SEEMED A MILITARY BLUNDER, TO BRING TWO UNITS LIKE THESE INTO CLOSE CONTACT... ONE CONSISTING OF MEN UNACCUSTOMED TO DISCIPLINE AND RESENTFUL OF ITS SLIGHTEST RESTRAINTS... THE OTHER COMPOSED OF ELITE TROOPS WHOSE PROUD BEARING ACTED LIKE AN IRRITANT...

TAK' A SQUINT AT THOSE SNOOTY GUARDSMEN! SEE THE WAY THEY'RE LOOKIN' DOWN THEIR NOSES AT US? SWELL-HEADED SO-AND-SO'S!

AY, SO THEY ARE! MEBBE THEY WOULDNA BE SO HIGH AND MIGHTY IF THEY'D MARCHED TWENTY MILES FRAE THE NEAREST RAILWAY STATION IN FULL KIT, LIKE WE HAVE!

THAT NIGHT, IN THE HUTTED CAMP'S CANTEEN, CHUNK'S BROW DARKENED AS HE SAW A KNOT OF THESE GUARDSMEN... MAJESTIC IN STATURE, POKER-STIFF, IMMACULATE...
LOOK AT 'EM! YE'D THINK THEY OWNED THE PLACE. BUT HERE'S WHERE WE TAK' SOME OF THE STARCH OUT OF THEM!

HE ADVANCED TOWARDS THEM, CLUMPINGLY. THERE THEY STOOD WITH SPOTLESS BELTS AND GAITERS, SPARKLING BUCKLES, BURNISHED BOOTS... BURNISHED BOOTS? CHUNK STAGED A COLLISION WITH THE GROUP OF GUARDSMEN AND CRAMMED HIS HEEL HARD DOWN ON ONE OF THOSE SHINING TOE CAPS...
YOW! YOU GREAT CLUMSY OAF!
SAY THAT AGAIN!

THE IRATE GUARDSMAN OBLIGED -- HEATEDLY. THE WORDS WERE HARDLY OUT WHEN MCGRORY CRAMMED THEM BACK IN HIS MOUTH WITH A FIST LIKE A ROCK...
GET STUCK INTO 'EM, LADS! THEY'RE GANGING UP ON CHUNK!

A KETTLE AND ITS OIL-HEATER TOPPLED TO THE FLOOR. THE CRASH OF IT WENT UNHEEDED IN THE UPROAR. THE FIGHT SPILLED FROM THE CANTEEN IN A TANGLED MASS OF HITTING, CURSING, TRAMPLING HUMANITY...
PACK IT UP, YOU MANIACS! HAVE A HEART, WILL YOU?

CAUGHT UP IN THE STRUGGLE, BUT NEUTRAL IN HIS SENTIMENTS, THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN SERVING IN THE CANTEEN MANAGED TO PRISE HIMSELF LOOSE FROM THE COMBATANTS -- ONLY TO BE OVERWHELMED BY A SUDDEN RUSH OF NEWCOMERS
IT'S THE NETHERBURN NEDS! A BUNCH OF 'EM HAVE PICKED ON SOME OF OUR BOYS! COME ON!

AT THAT SAME MOMENT, FIZZER GALBRAITH AND SEVERAL OF HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES SHOWED UP. THEY HAD SCANT ESTEEM FOR CHUNK AND HIS KNORED SPIRITS -- BUT STILL LESS FOR THE GUARDSMEN, AND A FIGHT WAS A FIGHT...
IT LOOKS LIKE THAT SPIT-AND-POLISH CROWD HAVE STARTED CHUCKING THEIR WEIGHT ABOUT ALREADY! HERE'S WHERE WE KNOCK SOME OF THE SWANK OUT O' THEM!

SOON THE GREATER PART OF TWO BATTALIONS HAD BECOME INVOLVED AND OFFICERS AND WARRANT OFFICERS CONVERGED ON THE AREA OF THE MONSTROUS MELEE BENT ON RESTORING ORDER ...

THEY HAD STILL TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION ON THE EMBATTLED MOB WHEN LIEUTENANT COLONEL CRAWFORD AND THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE GUARDS' UNIT PUT IN AN APPEARANCE ...
YOUR INFERNAL RIFF RAFF STARTED THIS, CRAWFORD! THEY MUST HAVE DONE! MY MEN HAVE NEVER BEEN MIXED UP IN ANY KIND OF TROUBLE BEFORE!
CONFOUND THOSE ROUGH-NECKS OF MINE! THEY WOULD KICK OVER THE TRACES JUST WHEN I'D BEGUN TO HOPE THEY WERE LEARNING HOW TO BEHAVE! BY JOVE, THEY'RE FIGHTERS, THOUGH! WHAT A PASTING THEY'RE GIVING THE GUARDSMEN!

SURE ENOUGH THE GUARDSMEN WERE TAKING A HAMMERING. DESPITE AN OVER ALL ADVANTAGE IN PHYSIQUE. BUT SUDDENLY, A SHRILL CRY OF ALARM REACED THEM ON . . .
FIRE! THE CANTEEN'S ON FIRE! IF IT AIN'T DOUSED THE WHOLE CAMP'LL GO UP IN SMOKE!

THAT CRY OF "FIRE" DID WHAT THE VOICES OF OFFICERS AND WARRANT OFFICERS COULD NOT DO. THE FRACAS DIED DOWN BUCKET-CARRYING PARTIES WERE QUICKLY FORMED -- MAINLY BY GUARDSMEN . .
SHOULD WE NO' GIVE A HAND, CHUNK?
AW SHOULD WORRY! LET THE OTHERS SWEAT IT OUT IF THEY'VE A MIND TO!

WITH NO THANKS TO THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING IT, THE BLAZE WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL...
THE CANTEEN'S BEEN WRITTEN OFF, BUT AT LEAST THE REST OF THE HUTMENTS ARE SAFE.
ABOUT FIFTY PER CENT OF MY MEN CAN BE CLASSED AS WRITTEN OFF AS WELL -- SO FAR AS TOMORROW'S TRAINING PROGRAMME IS CONCERNED, ANYHOW! THEY'LL BE ON SICK PARADE! YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE LAST OF THIS, CRAWFORD!

CRAWFORD CERTAINLY HAD NOT HEARD THE LAST OF IT. NOR HAD THE RANK AND FILE OF HIS BATTALION. A FEW DAYS LATER, AFTER A BUSTERING INTERVIEW WITH A WRATHFUL BRIGADIER, HE HARANGUED THEM STERNLY...
I'M WARNING YOU! AS A RESULT OF YOUR DISGRACEFUL BEHAVIOUR THE BRIGADE COMMANDER INTENDED RECOMMENDING YOUR DISBANDMENT AND PIECE-MEAL TRANSFER TO OTHER UNITS. I PLEADED WITH HIM TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE, AND HE FINALLY AGREED -- BUT WITH EXTREME RELUCTANCE...

AND HIS WORDS HAD SOME EFFECT, THOUGH NOT BECAUSE OF ANY SENSE OF REGIMENTAL PRIDE....
SO THERE WAS TALK OF SPLITTIN' US UP, EH? WELL, WE WOULDNA WANT THAT, LADS. WE'D BETTER LIE LOW FOR A WHILE AND KEEP OUT O' TROUBLE-- JUST UN'TIL ALL THIS HAS BLOWN OVER, LIKE.

A COMMENT FROM FIZZER GALBRAITH CAUGHT CHUNK'S EAR. THEIR LATE ADVERSARIES WERE SETTING FORTH ON A TRAINING EXERCISE. DESPITE BLACK EYES AND BRUISED FACES, THEY WERE MARCHING WITH SUPERB PRECISION...
LOOK AT 'EM! WE DIONA HALF BASH THEM, BUT THEY'RE STEPPING OUT LIKE KINGS. YE'VE GOT TO ADMIT THEY MAKE A BRAW SIGHT, AND THAT'S A FACT.
DINNA TELL ME YOU WANT TO APE A PACK OF FLAMING ROBOTS LIKE THEM, FIZZER!

CHUNK MCGRORY HAD SPOKEN IN DERISION. YET AS TIME WENT BY HE WAS INFECTED BY THAT SAME GRUDGING ADMIRATION FIZZER HAD EXPERIENCED. IT WAS A FEELING THAT GRADUALLY CIRCULATED THROUGH THE ENTIRE BATTALION DURING ITS SERVICE ALONGSIDE THE GUARDS ...

EYES--- LEFT!

I'M BOUND TO SAY YOUR FELLOWS ARE SMARTENING UP, CRAWFORD.

OFFICERS' MESS

YES. IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, THEY'VE DEVELOPED THE GLIMMERINGS OF AN ESPRIT DE CORPS SINCE THEY'VE BEEN HERE. AND I'M CERTAIN THEY'RE ACQUIRING IT FROM THE EXAMPLE SET BY YOUR GUARDSMEN.

CRAWFORD WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE, ALTHOUGH FEW OF THOSE IN THE RANKS OF HIS BATTALION WOULD HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED IT ..

THERE'S STILL TENSION BETWEEN OUR TWO UNITS, CRAWFORD, BUT AT LEAST THEY'RE KEEPING THE PEACE. JUST THE SAME, I SOMETIMES FEEL WE'RE SITTING ON A POWDER-BARREL.

YOU WON'T HAVE THAT SENSATION MUCH LONGER. I'VE BEEN TOLD TO HOLD MYSELF IN READINESS TO MOVE OUT WITH MY COMMAND. WE'RE LEAVING THE BRIGADE AND GOING OVERSEAS.

THE DESTINATION WAS STILL A SECRET TO THE MAJORITY OF CRAWFORD'S BATTALION WHEN THEY BOARDED A TROOPSHIP AT LIVERPOOL ...
I WISH WE KNEW WHERE WE WERE GOING.
ONE THING'S SURE WE'RE NO' GOING ON ANY PLEASURE-CRUISE.

THEY WERE OUT TO SEA WITH AN ESCORT OF DESTROYERS BEFORE IT WAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THEY WERE BOUND FOR THE FAR EAST. THEIR ROLE? TO HELP STEM THE TIDE OF CONQUEST WHICH WAS CARRYING THE INFAMOUS BANNER OF THE RISING SUN TO THE VERY GATES OF INDIA ...
SO WE'RE TO FIGHT THE JAPS. WELL, MEBBE THEY'LL NO' HAVE IT ALL THEIR OWN WAY WHEN WE GET TO GRIPS WI' THEM!
HOW DO I GET TO GRIPS WI' THIS BLOOMIN' SWINGIN' BED? THAT'S WHAT BOTHERS ME! I FEEL LIKE I NEED A KIP, BUT I'M DASHED IF I CAN GET INTO THE CONTRAPTION.
HERE, I'LL GIVE YE A HOIST UP, WEE BOY.

THEY SOON BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO LIFE ABOARD SHIP -- AND TO WEARING THE LIGHTWEIGHT TROPICAL KIT ISSUED TO THEM. THEY HAD LONG SINCE FOUND THEIR SEA LEGS WHEN THE TRANSPORT TOUCHED CEYLON ...

WHO ARE THESE BLOKES?

MEBBE THE R.S.M. CAN ANSWER THAT.

THEY WERE SENT OUT FROM ENGLAND ON GARRISON DUTY A FEW MONTHS AGO. BUT NOW THEY'RE BEING DRAFTED TO THE BURMA FRONT ALONG WITH US.

THE MEN FILING UP THE GANGWAY BELONGED TO THE FIRST BATTALION OF A FAMOUS COUNTY REGIMENT. FROM AN UPPER DECK, LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CRAWFORD AND HIS SECOND IN-COMMAND WATCHED THE EMBARKATION WITH SOME DISQUIET ...

UP TILL NOW THE VOYAGE HAS BEEN TROUBLE FREE. I ONLY HOPE IT STAYS SO. BUT THIS LOT THAT'S COMING ABOARD IS ONE OF THOSE PLUSHY UNITS WITH A HABIT OF RUBBING OTHERS UP THE WRONG WAY. STILL, MAYBE OUR FELLOWS HAVE LEARNED SENSE AND WILL STAY OUT OF MISCHIEF.

WE'LL KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED, MAJOR MUNRO.

THE TROOP-SHIP CONTINUED ON HER JOURNEY -- WITHOUT INCIDENT TILL THE COASTLINE OF CEYLON HAD SUNK BELOW THE HORIZON. THEN A STORM BEGAN TO BREW -- THE KIND OF STORM NO WEATHER-EXPERTS COULD HAVE PREDICTED ...

HERE COME SOME OF THAT POSH CROWD NOW. I SUPPOSE THEY'VE GOT SETTLED IN AND ARE TAKIN' A LOOK ROUND. I HEAR TELL MOST O' THEM ARE REGULARS.

WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY SEEM TO FANCY THEMSELVES.

IN PASSING, ONE OF THE NEWCOMERS MADE A MOCKING OBSERVATION. HIS REMARKS INDICATED THAT INFORMATION ON THE ORIGIN AND REPUTATION OF THE BATTALION RAISED BY CRAWFORD HAD TRAVELLED AHEAD OF IT ...
THERE THEY ARE, MATES. THE FISH-AND-CHIP FUSILIERS. AND IF THESE ARE SOME OF THE SERGEANTS YOU CAN GUESS WHAT A LOAD OF SCUM THE REST OF THEM MUST BE.
THAT DID IT! CHUNK AND FIZZER AND THEIR FELLOW NON-COMS MOVED FROM THE RAIL. THEIR BLOOD WAS UP!
FISH AN'-CHIP FUSILIERS, IS IT? I'LL KNOCK YE AS FLAT AS A PER.SHIN' FLOUNDER!

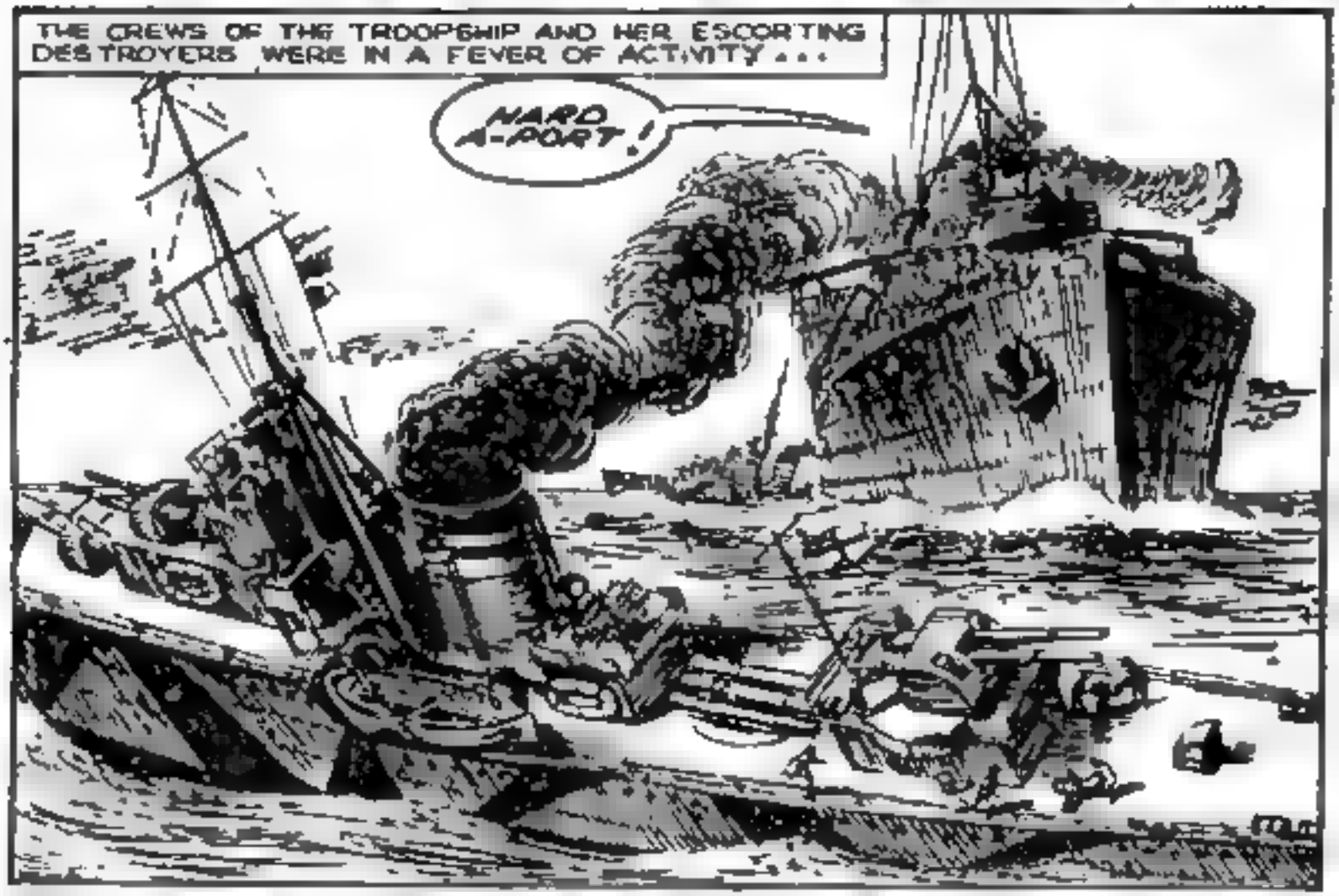
FIZZER GALBRAITH'S FIST BANGED HOME WITH A FORCE THAT SLAMMED THE OTHER MAN INTO OBLIVION. THE VICTIM OF THE PUNCH HIT THE DECK WITH A RESOUNDING THUD AND HIS FALL SPARKED OFF A TEMPESTUOUS FREE-FOR-ALL ...

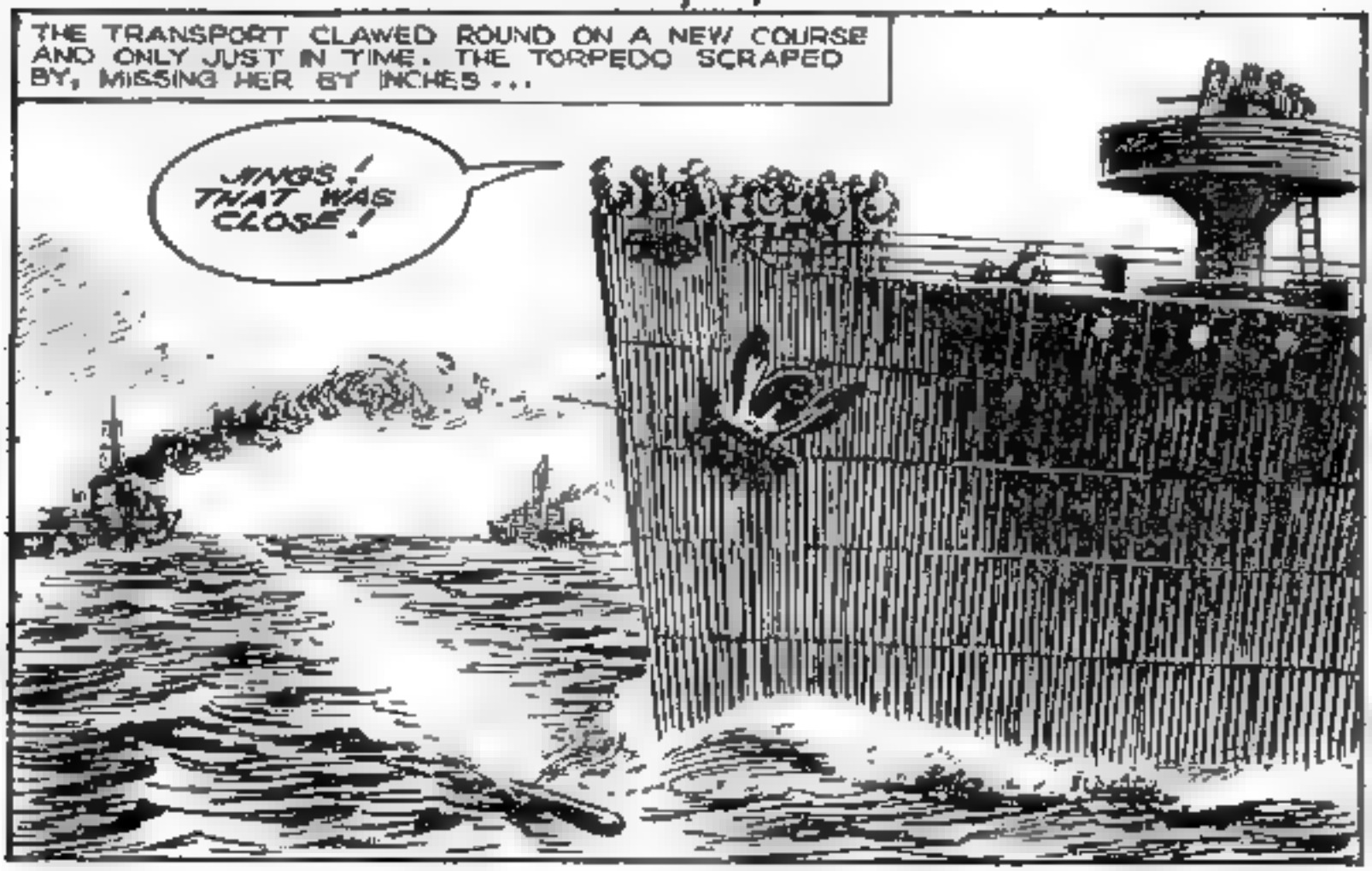
BASH 'EM, LADS! NOBODY SNEERS AT US AND GETS AWAY WITH IT!

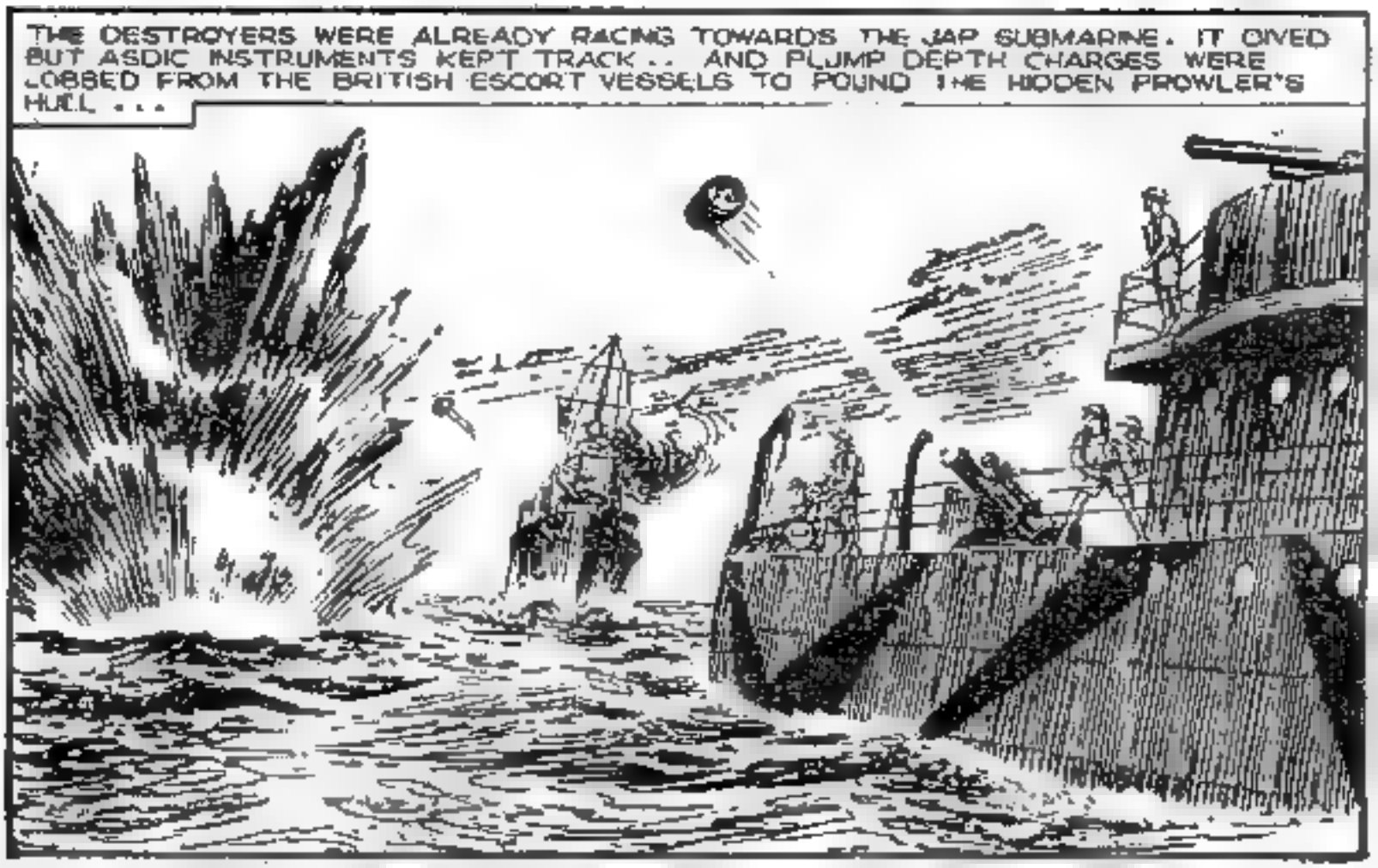
SHOUTS AROSE AS MEN OF BOTH UNITS SAW WHAT WAS AFOOT AND STARTED TO HURRY FOR'ARD. THE SITUATION HAD ALL THE MAKINGS OF ANOTHER MASS-SCALE OUTBREAK OF ASSAULT AND BATTERY. BUT THE AFFAIR WAS NIPPED IN THE BUD~ *BY ENEMY INTERVENTION!*

ACTION STATIONS! JAP SUBMARINE OFF THE STARBOARD BOW! *ACTION STATIONS!*

THE TRANSPORT'S TANNOY SYSTEM CARRIED THE ALARM TO ALL PARTS OF THE VESSEL. THE RUMPUS BETWEEN THE KHAKI-CLAD RIVALS CEASED ABRUPTLY...
THERE IT IS! I CAN SEE ITS PERISCOPE!
CRIVVENS! AND I CAN SEE A TORPEDO THAT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT HAS OUR NUMBER ON IT!


THE CREWS OF THE TROOPSHIP AND HER ESCORTING DESTROYERS WERE IN A FEVER OF ACTIVITY...
HARD A-PORT!


THE TRANSPORT CLAWED ROUND ON A NEW COURSE AND ONLY JUST IN TIME. THE TORPEDO SCRAPED BY, MISSING HER BY INCHES...
JINGS! THAT WAS CLOSE!


THE DESTROYERS WERE ALREADY RACING TOWARDS THE JAP SUBMARINE. IT DIVED BUT ASDIC INSTRUMENTS KEPT TRACK.. AND PLUMP DEPTH CHARGES WERE LOBBED FROM THE BRITISH ESCORT VESSELS TO POUND THE HIDDEN PROWLER'S HULL...

HEAVILY DAMAGED, THE ENEMY CRAFT WAS FORCED TO SURFACE; BUT IT WAS STILL A DEADLY MENACE. THE CONNING TOWER HATCH OPENED AND SQUAT FIGURES LEAPED OUT TO MAN THE SUBMARINE'S ARMAMENT BRITISH GUNNERS WERE AT THE READY, HOWEVER .

SHELLS FROM TRANSPORT AND DESTROYERS SLAMMED INTO THE JAP. THE SUBMARINE'S STERN LIFTED STEEPLY, STRICKENLY. WATCHING MEN BELLOWED THEIR APPRECIATION IN UNISON ... MEN WHO HAD BEEN WAGING THEIR OWN PRIVATE WAR A FEW MINUTES AGO ...

THEY'VE GOT HER! THE SAILORS HAVE GOT HER, CHUM! THREE CHEERS FOR THE NAVY!

THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS FROM THE ENEMY VESSEL, AND WHEN A PATCH OF OIL THAT MARKED HER GRAVE HAD DISPERSED, THERE WAS NOTHING TO SHOW SHE HAD EVER EXISTED.. EXCEPT A CERTAIN DEGREE OF COMRADESHIP HER ATTEMPTED ATTACK ON THE TROOPSHIP HAD INSPIRED ...
I'M SORRY I GOT YOUR GOAT, MATE LET'S SHAKE HANDS ALL ROUND.
THAT SUITS US, SO LONG AS NONE OF YE TRY TO MAKE ANY MORE FUNNY CRACKS ABOUT US!

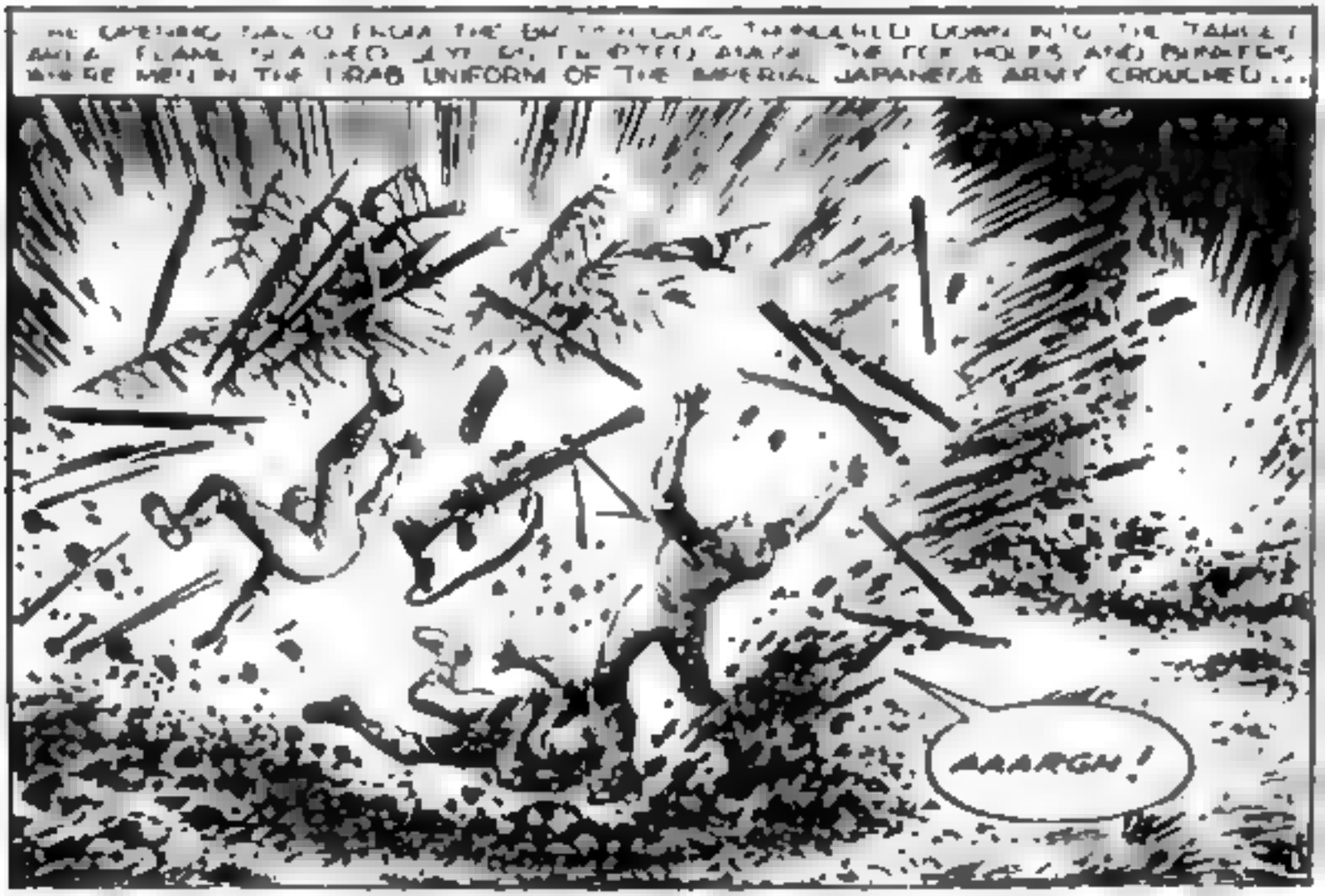
IN A CABIN THEY SHARED, CRAWFORD AND HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND EXPRESSED THEIR RELIEF THAT NIGHT OVER THE UNEXPECTED TURN EVENTS HAD TAKEN...
YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, WE NEARLY HAD A HECK OF A ROW ON OUR HANDS JUST BEFORE THAT JAP SUB SHOWED UP TODAY?
YES, MAJOR MUNRO. AND I ALSO KNOW FROM INQUIRIES I MADE THAT IT BEGAN BECAUSE OF A SLIGHTING REMARK. SOMETHING ABOUT THE FISH-AND-CHIP FUSILIERS. WHICH SEEMS TO [redacted]CATE THOSE ROWDIES OF OURS ARE STARTING TO ACQUIRE SOME SORT OF REGIMENTAL PRIDE...

Chapter 5. BATTLE-FEVER

A FEW WEEKS AFTER REACHING INDIA, WHERE THEY UNDERWENT SPECIALISED TRAINING IN THE GRIM PRINCIPLES OF JUNGLE WAR, CRAWFORD'S BACK STREET BATTALION MOVED TO THE BURMA FRONT. THEY TOOK OVER A SECTION OF THE LINE FROM A UNIT OF TOUGH LITTLE GURKHAS...

NAMBU AND JUKI MACHINE GUNS SCOURGED THE BRITISH POSITIONS WITH WICKED SQUIRTS OF TRACER... BULLETS SPATTERED THE PARAPET OF A SLIT OCCUPIED BY CHUNK MCGRORY, A YOUNG LEUTENANT WHO WAS HIS PLATOON COMMANDER AND THE LATTER'S BATMAN...

THE BATTALION WAS TO PUT IN A DAWN ATTACK. THEY HAD REHEARSED IT OVER SIMILAR GROUND BEHIND THE BATTLE ZONE. NOW IT WAS TO BE THE REAL THING -- AND THEY TENSED AS THEY HEARD THE SUDDEN DRUM-FIRE OF HEAVY ARTILLERY...
THERE GO THE FIRST SHELLS, SERGEANT GALBRAITH -- ON THEIR WAY TO THE ENEMY LINES. IN ANOTHER TWENTY MINUTES WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY AS WELL.
THAT WE WILL, LIEUTENANT MITCHELL. AND THE JAPS'LL WONDER WHAT'S HIT THEM THEN.


THE OPENING SALVO FROM THE BRITISH GUNS THUNDERED DOWN INTO THE TARGET AREA. FLAME SLASHED, JOYFUL, DROPPED AMONG THE FOX HOLES AND BUNKERS WHERE MEN IN THE DRAB UNIFORM OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY CROUCHED...
AAARGH!

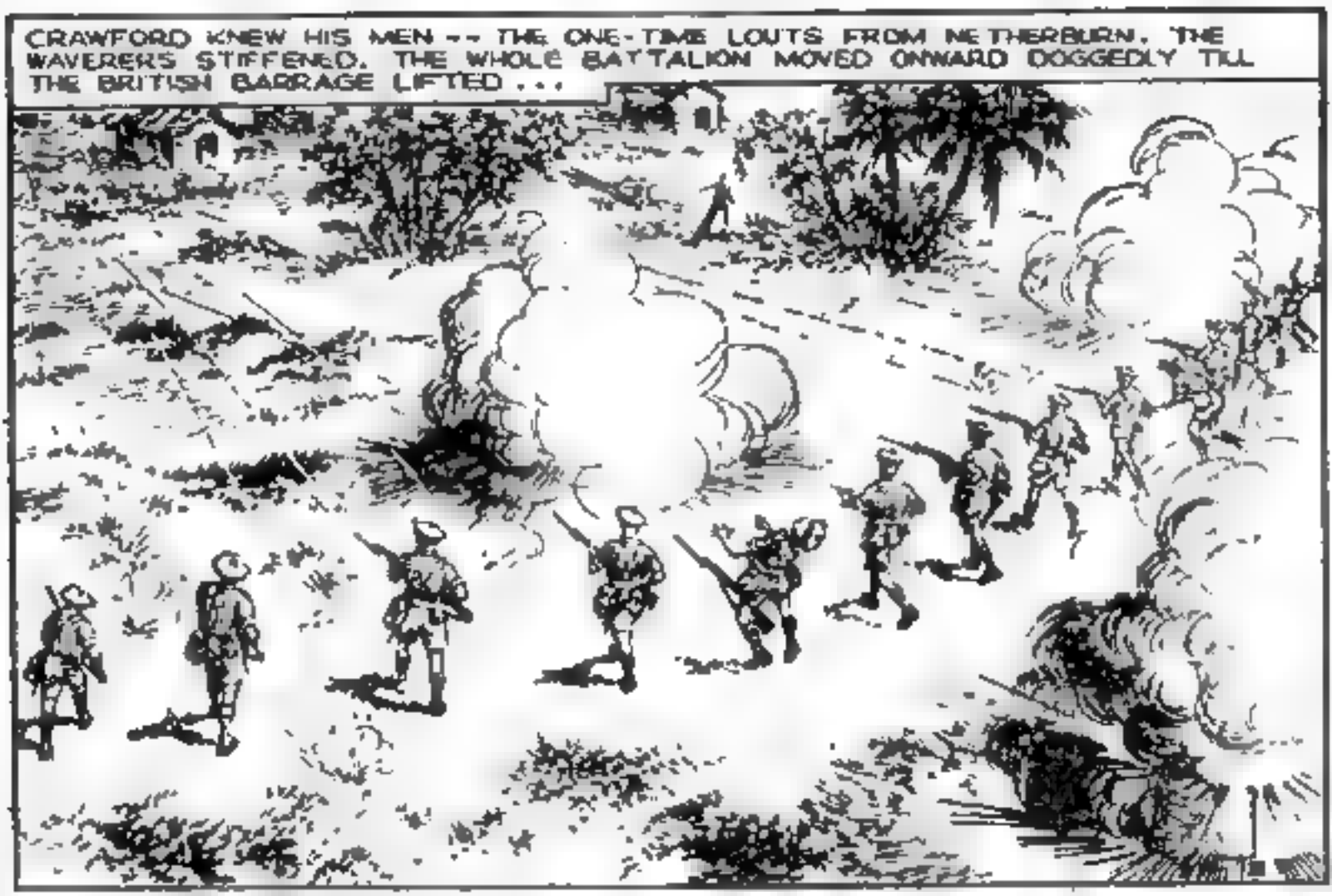
THAT GALVO STRUCK THE INITIAL CHORD IN A MONSTROUS CONCERTO OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. ABOVE THE BRITISH FRONT LINE, THE AIR CAME ALIVE WITH THE WHISPERING RUSTLE OF CEASELESS FLIGHTS OF SHELLS. THE JAP POSITIONS WERE TRANSFORMED INTO A HOLOCAUST...
CRIVVENS ! I WOULDNA LIKE TO BE AT THE WRONG END O' THAT BARRAGE! WHAT A HAMMERING!
AND I THINK I HEAR MORTARS COMING INTO ACTION BEHIND US, TOO. THEY'LL THICKEN UP THE BOMBARDMENT AND SEARCH OUT THE JAPS IN THEIR BURROWS.

WITHOUT LET UP, BRITISH GUNNERS AND MORTARMEN CONTINUED TO RAIN HIGH EXPLOSIVES ON THE ENEMY. THE JAP LINES WERE STILL SHUDDERING UNDER A DELUGE OF SHELLS AND BOMBS WHEN DAYBREAK TINTED THE EASTERN SKY...
THIS IS IT! FORWARD, MEN!

KHAKI FIGURES BEGAN TO FOOT-SLOG THEIR WAY ACROSS NO MAN'S LAND IN EXTENDED LINE. THEY TRUDGED UNHURRIEDLY BUT STEADFASTLY TOWARDS THE RAGING, ROARING INFERNO THAT MARKED THE ENEMY POSITIONS ...

ALL AT ONCE THE BRITISH WERE UNDER FIRE THEMSELVES. JAP MORTARS AND ARTILLERY ZEROED ON THEM. FROM FORWARD POSITIONS, ENEMY INFANTRYMEN WHO HAD SURVIVED THE BRITISH BARRAGE CUT LOOSE WITH RIFLES -- WITH MACHINE-GUNS ...

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CRAWFORD WAS QUICK TO NOTE A HINT OF UNSTEADINESS AMONG HIS MEN. PROMPTLY, HE MOVED UP WITH HIS ORDER GROUP . . .
KEEP GOING! SHOW THOSE JAPS WHAT THEY'RE UP AGAINST! MCGRORY, YOU'VE LOST LIEUTENANT GORDON. IT'S UP TO YOU TO TAKE HIS PLACE!


CRAWFORD KNEW HIS MEN -- THE ONE-TIME LOUTS FROM NETHERBURN. THE WAVERERS STIFFENED. THE WHOLE BATTALION MOVED ONWARD DOGGEDLY TILL THE BRITISH BARRAGE LIFTED . . .

THEY FOUGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH A CURTAIN OF HOT METAL AND EIGHTY YARDS FROM THE ENEMY, THEY BROKE INTO A FEROCIOUS BAYONET-CHARGE ...

THE WEE YELLOW SO AND SO'S ARE GOING TO MAKE A RAMMY OF IT! WADE INTO 'EM, LADS!

THE MAIN BRITISH TASK WAS THE RECAPTURE OF A RIDGE THE JAPS HAD SEIZED EARLIER. BUT A VILLAGE IN FRONT OF THAT RIDGE, LONG ABANDONED BY ITS BURMESE INHABITANTS, WAS THE IMMEDIATE CONCERN OF CHUNK'S PLATOON ...

BAYING IN THE ROUGH-EDGED ACCENTS OF THEIR BACK-ALLEY ORIGINS, MCGRORY AND HIS MEN ROMPED THROUGH THE CLUSTER OF BASHA HUTS TO WINKLE OUT OTHER FOES LURKING THERE ...
CHUNK, WE'RE IN LUCK! THIS HUT'S BEEN USED AS A STORE. IT'S FULL OF GRUB! TINNED GRUB, SOME OF IT! AY, AND IT LOOKS LIKE CAPTURED BRITISH STUFF.
GRUB, EH? THAT'LL COME IN HANDY. BUT LISTEN. WE'LL KEEP QUIET ABOUT THIS. THE FIRST CHANCE WE GET, WE'LL SLIP BACK AND COLLECT AS MUCH OF IT AS WE CAN CARRY.

TO RIGHT AND LEFT OF THE VILLAGE, OTHER PLATOONS AND COMPANIES OF THE BATTALION WERE THRUSTING TOWARDS THE RIDGE AGAINST FANATICAL OPPOSITION ...

IT WAS DESPERATE HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT FOR THE MOST PART, WITH NO QUARTER ASKED OR GIVEN BY ANY OF THOSE ENGAGED IN IT. BULLETS AND BAYONETS TOOK THEIR TOLL, ALONG WITH THE SMALL BUT DEADLY MILLS GRENADES ...

WELL DONE, THAT MAN!

FIRST TO GAIN THE SUMMIT OF THE RIDGE WERE TWO PLATOONS FROM THE SAME COMPANY. ONE WAS LED BY CHUNK MCGRORY. THE OTHER WAS THE PLATOON COMMANDED BY LIEUTENANT MITCHELL ...

LET'S GET AFTER 'EM, SIR! MCGRORY AND HIS BUTTIES ARE!

OUR INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO TAKE THE RIDGE AND REORGANISE ON IT! MCGRORY HAS NO RIGHT TO EXCEED THOSE INSTRUCTIONS! BESIDES, I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THAT JUNGLE! IT'S PROBABLY BRISTLING WITH JAP SUPPORT TROOPS!

CUPPING HIS HANDS AROUND HIS MOUTH, LIEUTENANT MITCHELL HAILED CHUNK PEREMPTORILY...
GET BACK UP HERE, MCGRORY! THAT'S AN ORDER!
YOU MIND YOUR AIN BUGINESS, MISTER BLOOMIN' MITCHELL! I'M THE HEAD YIN IN THIS PLATOON AND I'LL HANDLE IT WITHOOT YOU PUTTING YOUR SPOKE IN!

IT WAS JUST ANOTHER INSTANCE OF SLACK DISCIPLINE, THE BATTLE FERVOUR THAT INDUCED CHUNK AND HIS MEN TO OVER-SHOOT THE OBJECTIVE, AND THEY WERE TO PAY FOR IT...
SIGHTS DOWN! RAPID...FIRE!

A BLIZZARD OF LEAD RIPPED FROM THE BAMBOO THICKETS. IT STOPPED THE FOOLHARDY CHUNK AND HIS PARTY DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS. THEY WENT TO GROUND. [illegible]ERAL OF THEM NEVER TO RISE AGAIN.
DOWN, LADS! DOWN!

PINNED THERE, McGRORY AND HIS PLATOON THREW ANSWERING SHOTS AT THE JUNGLE'S EDGE. BUT THE JAP MARKSMEN WERE WELL CONCEALED. AND THE JOCKS WERE OUT IN THE OPEN, DESPERATELY EXPOSED..
WHAT ARE THOSE FELLOWS OF OURS DOING DOWN THERE?
TRIGGER-HAPPY, SIR, THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE! I TRIED TO CALL McGRORY BACK BUT HE TOOK NO NOTICE! HE AND THE MEN WITH HIM ARE OUT ON A LIMB NOW AND I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN HELP THEM.

CRAWFORD KNEW HOW TO HELP THEM. HE ORDERED A SIGNALLER TO SEND BACK A MESSAGE TO THE BATTALION MORTAR PLATOON ON HIS WALKIE TALKIE RADIO. IN LESS THAN A MINUTE THE COUGHING OF THE MORTARS WAS HEARD AND BOMBS BEGAN TO EXPLODE AT THE EDGE OF THE THICKET...

THAT'S SHAKING THE BUGGERS UP. B'JINGS!

SMOKE BOMBS WERE INTERMINGLED WITH THOSE CONTAINING HIGH EXPLOSIVE. SCRAMMED OFF, CHUNK AND HIS COMRADES WERE ABLE TO EXTRICATE THEMSELVES FROM THE PLIGHT IN WHICH THEIR OWN RECKLESSNESS HAD LANDED THEM...

SERGEANT McGRORY, I'LL THANK YOU TO USE YOUR HEAD IN FUTURE AND STICK TO ORDERS. YOU MIGHT HAVE GOT YOUR WHOLE PLATOON KILLED!

SO THIS IS THE THANKS A BLOKE GETS FOR BEING KEEN! I TRY TO KNOCK OFF AS MANY JAPS AS I CAN, AND I WIND UP WITH A BLINKIN' ROCKET FROM CRAWFIE!

CHUNK AND HIS MEN WERE ORDERED TO DIG IN ON THE LEFT FLANK OF THE BATTALION. THAT MADE THEM NEIGHBOURS OF A PLATOON BELONGING TO THE UNIT WHICH HAD BEEN WITH THEM SINCE CEYLON...
YOU JOCKS GOT A BIT BEYOND YOURSELVES, DIDN'T YOU? RAN INTO A PROPER HORNETS' NEST, EH?
HORNETS' NEST? WE ALL HAD A GRAND CHANCE TO CHASE THE JAPS CLEAR THROUGH THE JUNGLE! AS IT IS, I'LL LAY ODDS THEY'VE SLOPED OFF. THERE'S NO' A SIGN O' LIFE DOWN THERE NOW.

CHUNK MCGRORY DETECTED NO VISIBLE OR AUDIBLE SIGNS OF ENEMY ACTIVITY THAT NIGHT, EITHER — WHEN HE QUIETLY ASSEMBLED HIS PLATOON FOR A MISSION THAT SMACKED OF DOWNRIGHT SKULDUGGERY...
NOW TO STOCK UP WI' SOME OF THE GRUB WE SAW IN THAT VILLAGE STORE HUT.
WHAT ABOUT THE JAPS, CHUNK? SUPPOSING THEY STARTED SOMETHING...

CHUNK CLAPPED A REASSURING HAND ON WEE ECK'S SHOULDER . . .
DINNA FASH YERSEL', WEE ECK! THERE'S NO' A JAP WITHIN MILES O' HERE. FORBYE THAT, WE'LL NO' BE LONG AWAY. A HALF-HOUR AT THE OUTSIDE.

MCGRORY'S CONFIDENCE WAS MISPLACED. JAPS WERE WITHIN EARSHOT OF HIM AT THAT VERY MOMENT... A STEALTHY PATROL OF JAPS UNDER THE COMMAND OF AN OFFICER WHO UNDERSTOOD ENGLISH, EVEN THE BRAND OF IT SPOKEN BY THE LIKES OF CHUNK AND ECK...
SO! THIS INFORMATION I MUST PASS ON WITHOUT DELAY!

Chapter 4: PRIDE OF REGIMENT

CAPTAIN FAY, CHUNK AND HIS COMRADES FILED DOWN TO THE OUTER EDGE OF VILLAGE. THEY GAINED THE STORE HUT, ENTERED IT TO LOAD UP WITH LOOT. THEY WERE STUFFING CANS OF FOOD INTO THEIR POCKETS AND INSIDE THEIR SHIRTS WHEN A SUDDEN UPROAR BROUGHT THEM CROWDING TO THE DOORWAY

CHUNK, IT'S A JAP ATTACK! AND YOU SAID THERE WASNA A JAP WITHIN MILES!

DROP EVERYTHING, LADS! DROP EVERYTHING AND DOUBLE BACK TO THE RIDGE! WE'LL BE NEEDED UP THERE!

THE NEED FOR MCGRORY'S PLATOON WAS PAST. POWERFUL JAP FORCES HAD EXPLOITED THE GAP LEFT IN THE BRITISH LINE. THE ENEMY HAD ATTACKED ON A NARROW FRONT -- SWARMED UP TO THE BREACH -- THEN FANNED OUT TO ENVELOP THE BRITISH BATTALION HOLDING THE RIDGE ...

BANZAI!

THEY'VE WORKED ROUND BEHIND US! THEY MUST HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THAT UNIT ON OUR LEFT!

NO, COLONEL! OUR OWN MEN HAVE LET US DOWN! I WAS ON A TOUR OF INSPECTION WHEN THE RUSH CAME! THE JAPS POURED OVER THE POSITIONS MCGRORY AND HIS PLATOON HAD DUG *BUT MCGRORY AND HIS MEN WEREN'T THERE!*

THE JAPS HAD HURLED FOUR BATTALIONS INTO THE ASSAULT. OUTNUMBERED, OUT MANOEUVRED BECAUSE THE DEFECTION OF AN ENTIRE PLATOON HAD LAID THEM WIDE OPEN TO ENCIRCLEMENT, THE BRITISH FOUGHT A HOPELESS BATTLE ...

IT WAS NEARLY ALL OVER BY THE TIME MCGRORY AND HIS PLATOON STRUGGLED UP TO THE SUMMIT OF THE RIDGE ...

THE SURVIVING OFFICERS AND MEN OF TWO BRITISH BATTALIONS WERE BEING MARCHED AWAY BY BRUTAL ESCORTS...AND MCGRORY GROUND HIS TEETH AS HE WATCHED ...
WE SHOULD'VE BEEN UP HERE DOIN' OUR BIT WHEN THE JAPS PUT IN THEIR ATTACK. INSTEAD, WE HAD TO BE AWAY ON THE SCROUNGE! BUT MEBBE WE CAN HELP YET! COME ON, YOUSE LADS!

WITH A CHORUS OF YELLS, CHUNK AND HIS PARTY STARTED ACROSS THE RIDGE — BENT ON CLOSING WITH A CROWD OF JAP GUARDS. IT WAS A GALLANT IF BELATED EFFORT, BORN OUT OF MINGLED RAGE AND MORTIFICATION...

ONLY ECK RAMSAY AND CHUNK SURVIVED THAT WILD, UNREASONED ONSLAUGHT. THEY BULLOOZED THEIR WAY INTO THE THICK OF THE JAPS -- DROPPED SEVERAL OF THEM BEFORE BEING BEATEN TO THE DIRT UNDER A RAIN OF SAVAGE BLOWS.

WHEN CHUNK AND ECK RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS IT WAS TO FIND THEY WERE BEING HALF CARRIED AND HALF-DRAGGED BY FOUR OTHER CAPTIVES OF THE JAPS...

FIZZER! WHERE THE BLAZES AM I?

WHERE YE'VE NO RIGHT TO BE, MCGORRY. IT'S A PITY THE JAPS HADNA WIPED OUT YOU AND RAMSAY ALONG WI' THE REST OF YOUR PLATOON, FOR IT'S THROUGH YOU WE'RE ALL PRISONERS.

The Railway Of Death

CHUNK OVERHEARD THAT BRIEF DISCUSSION. IT BROUGHT A FLUSH TO HIS FACE.

HOW MANY DAYS HAVE WE BEEN ON THE GO, CHUNK — SIX DAYS ? SEVEN DAYS ? I'VE LOST COUNT BUT I DINNA THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO STICK IT OUT ANOTHER TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

YE'VE GOT TO, ECK. I'VE ENOUGH ON MY CONSCIENCE WITHOUT YOU FALLIN' OUT. IF YE DO, THEY'LL SHOOT YE WHERE YE LIE. LEAN ON ME, ECK. LEAN ON ME AS HARD AS YE LIKE ...

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, CHUNK MCGRORY WAS EXPERIENCING A SENSE OF SHAME ...

R.S.M. GRANT WAS RIGHT. I'M TO BLAME FOR HUNDREDS OF MEN BEIN' IN THIS FIX. IF ONLY THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD DO TO SQUARE MYSELF WI' THEM ...

REMORSE DUG INTO THE BIG FELLOW'S SOUL — AND DUG THE DEEPER AFTER THE COLUMN'S DESTINATION WAS REACHED. IT WAS THE NORTHERNMOST POINT OF AN INFAMOUS RAILWAY WHICH HAD ALREADY COST THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF PRISONERS-OF-WAR ...

MEN, I'VE JUST BEEN TOLD WE'RE TO BLOW THE LAST LEG IN A LINE OF COMMUNICATION REACHING TO THE BATTLE FRONT. THE JAPS INTEND USING IT FOR THE TRANSPORT OF REINFORCEMENTS AND SUPPLIES TO INCREASE THE PRESSURE AGAINST INDIA.

R.S.M. GRANT SPOKE QUESTIONINGLY WHEN LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CRAWFORD HAD FINISHED HIS PRONOUNCEMENT.

SIR, SURELY IT'S A VIOLATION OF THE ARTICLES OF WAR -- TO EMPLOY PRISONERS FOR A JOB LIKE THAT?

IT IS. BUT THE JAPS DON'T GIVE A HANG FOR THE ARTICLES OF WAR. EITHER WE DO AS THEY SAY, OR THEY'LL MASSACRE US!

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CAMP, THE MEN OF THE BATTALION CAPTURED ALONG WITH CRAWFORD'S WERE LISTENING TO A SIMILAR ADDRESS FROM THEIR COMMANDING OFFICER. LATER, BOTH UNITS WERE DIVIDED INTO WORKING PARTIES AND ISSUED WITH PICKS, SHOVELS, HAMMERS ...

NO ONE WAS EXEMPT. THE BRITISH OFFICERS ACCEPTED THE HUMILIATION WITH QUIET DIGNITY. ONLY ONE WAS HEARD TO VOICE HIS THOUGHTS

IT WAS A BAD DAY FOR US WHEN WE WERE PAIRED OFF IN THE LINE WITH THAT SHOWER IN THE TAM-O'-SHANTERS! THEY'RE NOT SOLDIERS AND NEVER WILL BE!

IS THAT SO, CAPTAIN? WELL, HERE'S ONE MAN THAT'S GOIN' TO SHOW HE'S AS GOOD A SOJER AS ANYBODY IN YOUR CROWD!

A JAPANESE OFFICER GAVE THE ORDER TO MOVE OFF. UNDER THEIR GUARDS, THE WORKING-PARTIES BEGAN TO SHAMBLE ACROSS THE CAMP'S COMPOUND. THEN ALL AT ONCE A BARRACK-SQUARE BELLOW RANG OUT...

PARTY! PARTY -- SHUN! MCGRORY, WHAT ARE YE WAITING FOR? WAKE UP, DARN YE!

WHO THE HECK D'YE THINK *YOU* ARE! IF YE EXPECT ME TO TAK' ORDERS...

BUT NEXT MOMENT, CHUNK SNAPPED TO ATTENTION AS HE SENSED FIZZER'S PURPOSE. DIM-WITTED IN SOME RESPECTS, THAT WAS FIZZER. BUT HE MEANT TO SALVAGE SOME SHRED OF SELF RESPECT FROM THE DISGRACE CHUNK HAD BROUGHT ON THE WHOLE BATTALION ..

PARTY! BY THE RIGHT... O-U-I-C-K... MARCH!

SQUARE-SHOULDERED AND ERECT, FIZZER'S SQUAD MARCHED OFF AND CRAWFORD, WATCHING IN SURPRISE, WAS CONSCIOUS OF A GLOW OF APPRECIATION ...

THIS HAS TO BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED! I'D NEVER HAVE CREDITED GALBRAITH HAD IT IN HIM! HE'S SHOWING US ALL HOW TO FACE UP TO THE SITUATION WE'RE IN! GOOD FOR HIM!

IT WAS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT BRITISHERS CAN SHOW IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY AND IT SPREAD THROUGH THE OTHER SQUADS THE JAPS WERE PERPLEXED BY IT... MARVELLED AT IT. BUT IN THEIR MEAN LITTLE MINDS THEY RESENTED IT, TOO...

HOW ABOUT A SONG WHILE WE WORK, MEN?

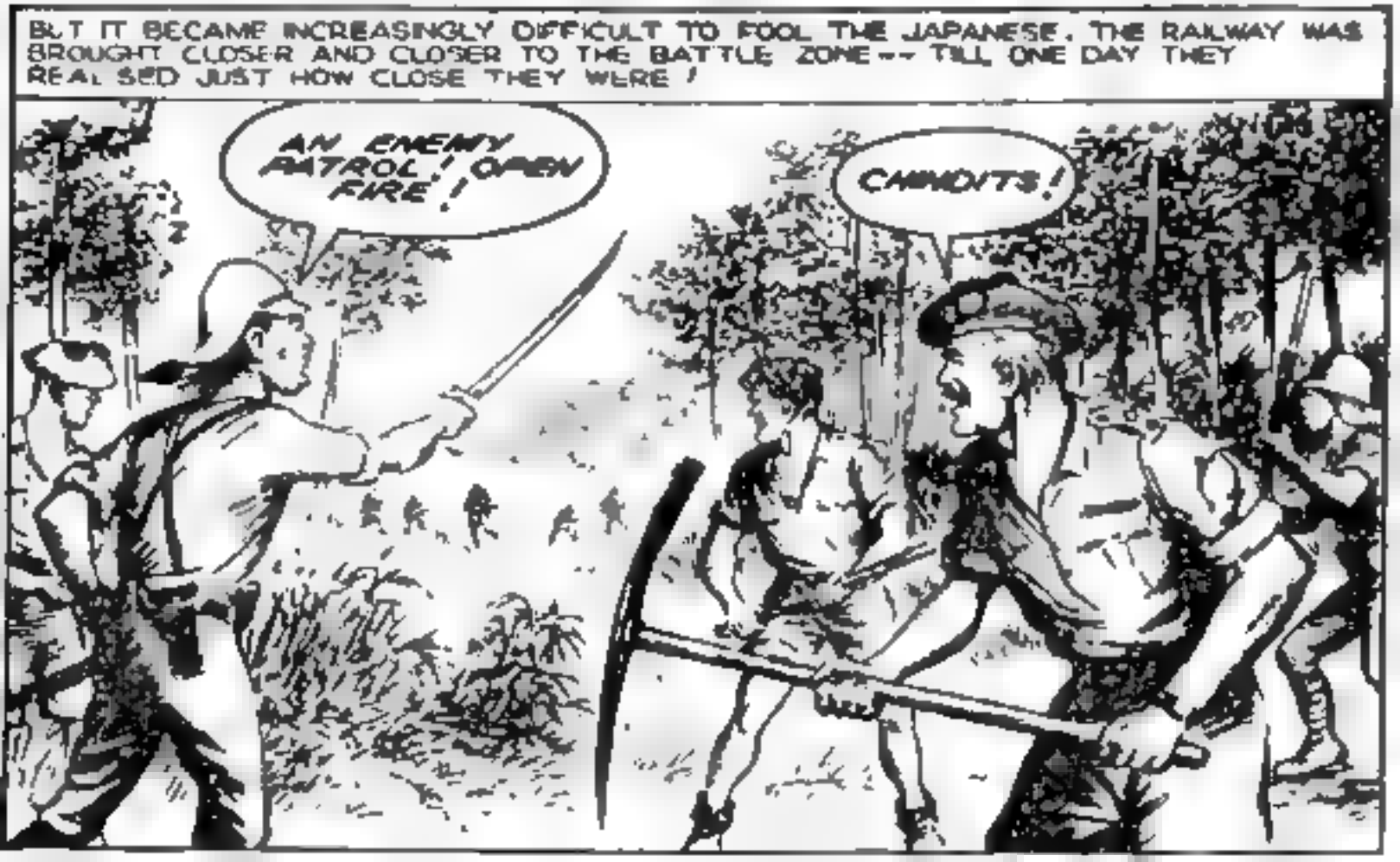
GOOD IDEA, SIR! LET'S MAKE IT SOMETHING LIVELY.

THEY'LL HAVE NO HEART FOR SINGING WHEN THEY BEGIN TO DROP LIKE FLIES — AS SO MANY OTHERS HAVE DONE ON THE RAILWAY OF DEATH.

THE RAILWAY OF DEATH. THAT WAS THE DREAD NAME WHICH HAD BEEN COINED FOR THIS ENTERPRISE. BUT IN SPITE OF LONG HOURS OF HARD LABOUR ON SHORT RATIONS, IN SPITE OF GLISTERING HEAT AND BRUTAL TREATMENT, THE MEN REMAINED IN GOOD HEART ...
REMEMBER, LADS! THE COLONEL'S ORDERS ARE TO LOOK AS IF YOU'RE WORKING FLAT-OUT, BUT AT THE SAME TIME SEE THAT YOU MAKE AS LITTLE REAL HEADWAY AS POSSIBLE.

MANY DODGES WERE DEVISED FOR HOLDING UP PROGRESS. ONE TRICK WAS TO BREAK YOUR PICK, OR SHOVEL, OR HAMMER. BUT IT WAS LIABLE TO DETECTION...
LOOK OUT, CHUNK! YOU'VE BEEN SPOTTED!
AH! I SEE WHAT YOU DO! I TAKE YOU TO HONOURABLE JAPANESE OFFICER! YOU SUFFER FOR THIS!

CHUNK SUFFERED — CRUELLY. YET WHEN COMRADES WHO HAD SEEMED TO DESPISE HIM WERE MOVED TO COMPASSION FOR HIM, HIS SUFFERINGS SEEMED WORTH WHILE.
SO! UNTIE HIM! AND REMEMBER, NEXT MAN WHO DO LIKE THIS ONE HAS DONE WILL GET WORSE THAN WHIPPING! HE WILL DIE!
EASY, CHUNK — EASY. WE'LL LOOK AFTER YE. AY. AND MEBBE SOME DAY THAT SLIT-EYED JAP OFFICER WILL PAY FOR THIS!


BUT IT BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO FOOL THE JAPANESE. THE RAILWAY WAS BROUGHT CLOSER AND CLOSER TO THE BATTLE ZONE — TILL ONE DAY THEY REALISED JUST HOW CLOSE THEY WERE!
AN ENEMY PATROL! OPEN FIRE!
CHARGE!

CHINDITS -- THOSE MEN OF THE BRITISH FOURTEENTH ARMY WHO OPERATED AS JUNGLE COMMANDOS. AT SIGHT OF THEM CRAWFORD'S JOCKS SEEMED TO BECOME GALVANISED...
AAARGH!

FALLING ON THEIR GUARDS, CRAWFORD AND HIS MEN LAID INTO THEM LIKE FURIES. THE PRISONERS TOOK THEIR LIVES IN THEIR HANDS AND SOME WENT DOWN BEFORE JAP BULLETS. BUT THE CHINDITS WERE SWARMING FORWARD NOW...

BETWEEN THEM, THE PRISONERS AND THE CHINDITS DEALT WITH THE JAPS. SOON CRAWFORD AND THE OFFICER IN COMMAND OF THE BRITISH RAIDING PARTY WERE CONFERRING TOGETHER...
MY ORDERS WERE TO SLIP BEHIND THE ENEMY AND HARASS HIS MAIN LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS. AN ALL-OUT BRITISH OFFENSIVE IS BEING MOUNTED IN THIS SECTOR
MAYBE WE CAN HELP YOU TO DISRUPT THEIR SUPPLY SYSTEM, MAJOR! LISTEN, AN AMMUNITION TRAIN HAS REACHED THE RAILHEAD A FEW MILES BACK FROM HERE. THE MEN OF ANOTHER BATTALION CAPTURED WITH US WERE DETAILED TO START UNLOADING THE AMMO ON TO WAITING LORRIES...

THE WEAPONS THE JAP GUARDS HAD CARRIED WERE ALREADY BEING GATHERED UP. CRAWFORD'S MEN QUICKLY TOOK COVER WITH THE CHINDITS. ALL WERE LYING IN WAIT WHEN THE SOUND OF MOTORS WAS HEARD...
HERE THEY COME, LADS! GET READY!
IF YE GET KNOCKED OFF WHEN THE FUN STARTS, FIZZER, I'LL TAK' YER PLACE
CHEERY LITTLE CUSS, AREN'T YE?

AS THE LORRIES OF THE ENEMY SUPPLY CONVOY RUMBLED INTO FULL VIEW, THE BAMBOO THICKETS AND THE UNDERGROWTH AT THE EDGES OF THE TRAIL FLASHED FIRE ...

JAP DRIVERS AND ESCORTING INFANTRYMEN BUNDLED FROM THE TRUCKS AND PLUNGED TO THE SIDES OF THE TRAIL. THEY WERE QUICK TO ANSWER THE TEMPEST OF LEAD THAT HAD BROUGHT THE CONVOY TO A HALT ...

GRAB HIS RIFLE, ECK! JUMP TO IT!

FROM THE NORTH CAME THE MUTED THUNDER OF ARTILLERY. IT TOLD OF THE BEGINNING OF THE BRITISH OFFENSIVE, AND IT HEARTENED THE CHINDITS AND THE JOCKS -- STEELED THEM TO MEET THE PRESSURE OF ENEMY REINFORCEMENTS WHEN THESE WERE SUMMONED FROM THE AREA OF THE RAILHEAD ...

KEEP IT UP, MEN! MAKE EVERY SHOT COUNT! AND REMEMBER, AS LONG AS WE HOLD OUT THEY CAN'T GET ANY OF THAT AMMUNITION THROUGH TO THEIR FORWARD TROOPS!

SUCCESSIVE JAP ATTACKS WERE BEATEN OFF IN THE LONG HOURS THAT ENSUED -- BUT AT HEAVY COST! THERE WAS NOT A CHINDIT LEFT IN ACTION AND CRAWFORD'S MEN HAD BEEN REDUCED TO COMPANY-STRENGTH, WHEN ARMOUR SUDDENLY APPEARED ON THE TRAIL BEHIND THEM ...

TANKS! BRITISH TANKS! THE FOURTEENTH ARMY'S BROKEN THROUGH!

THE ENEMY'S FRONT HAD CRUMBLED. WHERE THE JAPS HAD POSSESSED ENORMOUS SUPERIORITY IN NUMBERS, TOO... BUT WHERE A CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF AMMUNITION AT THE HEIGHT OF BATTLE HAD COUNTERBALANCED THEIR ADVANTAGE, ENABLING THE BRITISH TO FIGHT ON EVEN TERMS ...

KEEP GOING! YOU'LL COME TO A RAILHEAD A FEW MILES FARTHER ON! THERE'S A BATTALION OF BRITISH PRISONERS-OF-WAR THERE AND I'LL GUARANTEE THEY'LL BE AS GLAD TO SEE YOU AS WE WERE!

THE UNIT WHICH HAD SHARED CAPTIVITY WITH CRAWFORD'S WAS RESCUED. NEXT DAY, THE EX-PRISONERS MARCHED OUT OF THE JUNGLE TO A REST AREA -- BEHIND THE BATTLE ZONE WHERE THE FOURTEENTH ARMY WAS EXPLOITING ITS VICTORY TO THE FULL ...

THESE MUST BE THE FELLOWS WE HEARD ABOUT -- THE ONES WHO WERE IN JAP HANDS.

YES. I'M TOLD THEY HAD A BAD TIME. BUT YOU WOULDN'T THINK SO, FROM THE WAY THEY'RE CARRYING THEMSELVES! IT SHOWS WHAT MEN CAN STAND UP TO -- WHEN THEY HAVE A SENSE OF REGIMENTAL PRIDE ...

PRIDE... THAT WAS WHAT THESE ONE-TIME LOUTS FROM "THE SHAMBLES" HAD DISCOVERED IN THE VERY MIDST OF DEFEAT AND DEGRADATION. A PRIDE THAT HAD FINALLY TRANSFORMED THE MEN OF A BACK STREET BATTALION, SETTING ITS SEAL ON THEM AS SOLDIERS ...

MEN LIKE FIZZER GALBRAITH, CHUNK MCGRORY AND ECK RAMSAY...MEN WHO HAD DONE MUCH TO ENSURE SUCCESS FOR AN OFFENSIVE THAT PROVED A TURNING-POINT IN THE BURMA CAMPAIGN...THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF BLOWS DESTINED TO SHATTER THE EVIL AMBITIONS OF JAPAN'S WAR-LORDS ...

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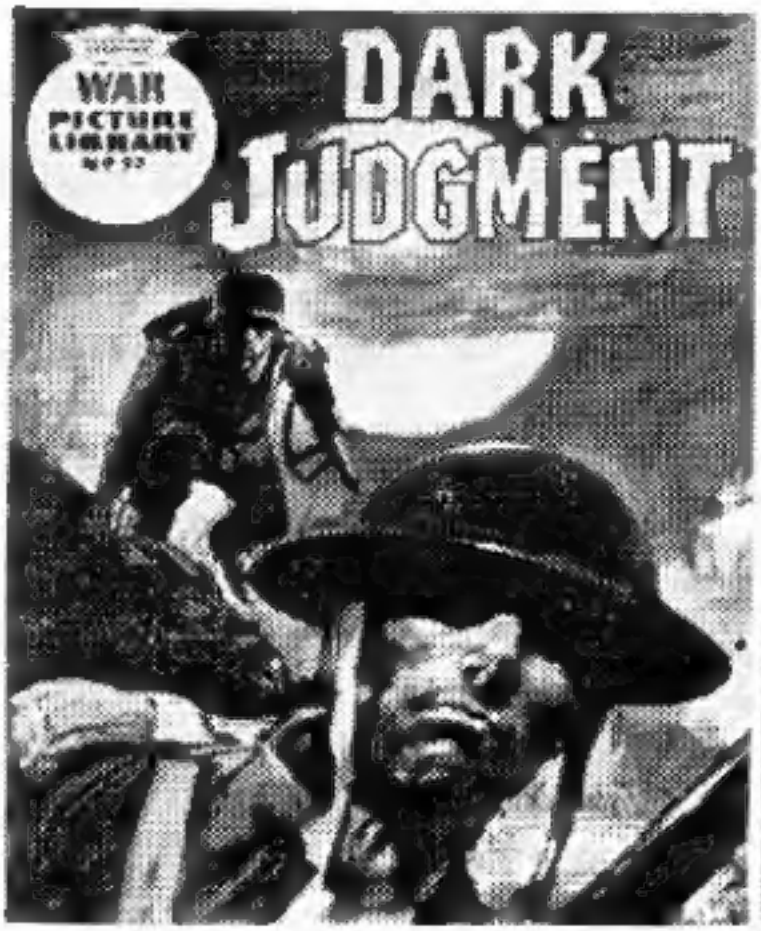
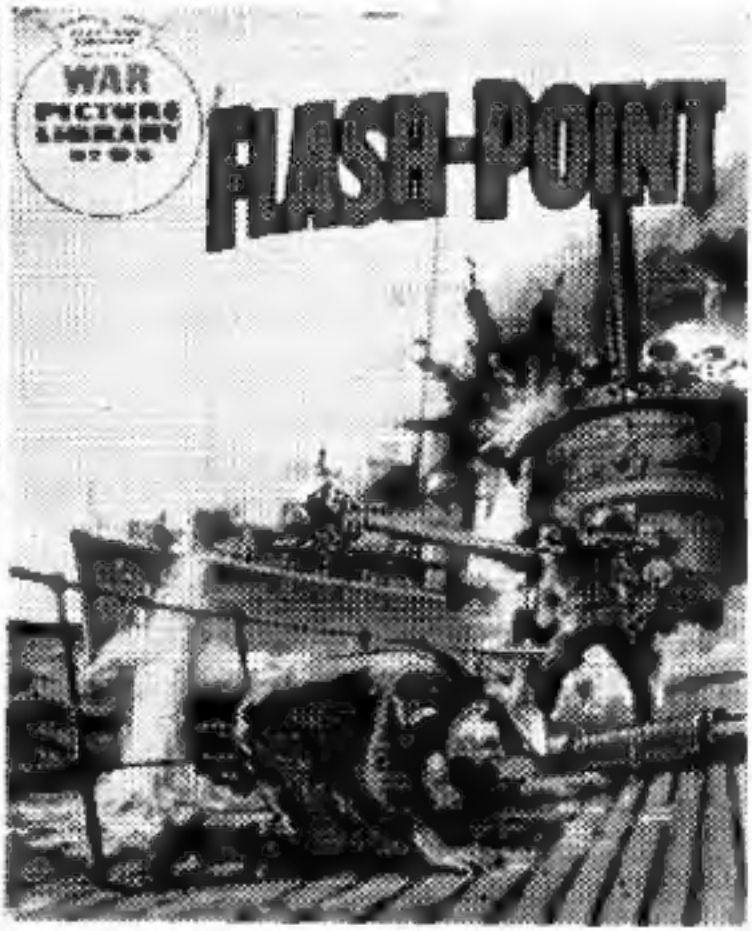


Give a spy enough rope and he will hang himself—or destroy those who seek to trap him !

No. 95 FLASH-POINT



France had been humiliated by its Nazi conquerors but there were many who were eager to fight on for freedom.

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